

The Curlytops

Growing Up



HOWARD R. GARIS

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"What's the matter?" asked Janet. "We're wrecked!"
gasped Lola.

"The Curlytops Growing Up"

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THE CURLYTOPS GROWING UP

OR

*Winter Sports and Summer
Pleasures*

BY

HOWARD R. GARIS

AUTHOR OF "THE CURLYTOPS AT CHERRY FARM,"
"THE CURLYTOPS AT SUNSET BEACH," "THE
CURLYTOPS IN A SUMMER CAMP," ETC.

Illustrated by

JULIA GREENE

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By HOWARD R. GARIS

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THE CURLYTOPS GROWING UP
Or, Winter Sports and Summer Pleasures

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THE CURLYTOPS GROWING UP

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THE CURLYTOPS GROWING UP

CHAPTER I

UNDER THE SNOW

“WHERE are you going, Trouble?”

Ted Martin paused in his work of making a number of snowballs and looked at his small brother who was trudging off toward the back yard.

“I’m going to get me a sword,” answered William, or “Trouble,” as he was more generally called.

“A sword?” exclaimed Ted in surprise. “What do you mean?”

“I mean I’m going to get a stick and it’s going to be my sword,” William went on to explain. “And I’m going to carry a sword and be a captain. I’ll be back in a minute!”

“He’s a cute kid!” exclaimed Tom Taylor, who was Ted’s best chum and who, on this Saturday morning when there was no

school, was helping Ted make snowballs, for there was going to be a fight.

Perhaps it was this talk of the fight that caused Trouble to want a sword. At any rate the little fellow kept on over the snow-covered ground toward the woodpile near the garage where he presently began searching about for a long stick that would do for a sword.

"I'm going to be a captain," said William, though the only one who heard him was Biscuit, the big Maltese cat that was stepping daintily along in the snow as if she did not like to get her paws wet or cold. "I'm going to be a captain in this fight!" declared Trouble, and Biscuit looked at him and mewed a little.

It was only a snowball fight which Ted Martin, his chum Tom Taylor, who lived near by, and some other boys had arranged for this Saturday. In Ted's yard a small snow fort had been built, and he and Tom, with some of their special friends, were going to defend the fort against the attack of Harry Morris and Henry Simpson, two boys who had their own "army."

"We have to hurry and get a lot of snowballs ready," said Tom.

"That's right," agreed Ted. "Make 'em as fast as you can. That other crowd will be here pretty soon."

"Here comes Charlie Dodd; he'll help us," observed Tom, as another boy came running into the yard, shouting:

"Here they are! Here they are!"

"You mean Harry and his crowd?" asked Ted.

"Sure! They're down the street hollering like anything, and they have an express wagon full of snowballs. Some have horse-chestnuts in 'em, too!"

"That isn't fair!" exclaimed Tom. "We agreed not to fight with horse-chestnut balls!"

"That's right!" agreed Ted, who was acting as captain, a post that Trouble wanted to fill. "If Harry has any horse-chestnuts in the snowballs he's going to use he can't throw 'em!"

"Well, let's make as many balls as we can before they get here!" suggested Tom. "Come on, Charlie! Get busy!"

The three boys and some of their friends who were to fight in the fort on their side began making balls as fast as they could, piling them in heaps within the fort. Ted for-

got all about William, whom he had more or less agreed to watch that morning. But William seemed to be all right, hunting for a wooden sword so he could be a "captain."

"Here they come!" suddenly cried Tom, as another crowd of boys swept into the Martins' back yard where the fort was erected. "There's a big gang of 'em!"

"I told Harry he could have more on his side than we have on ours," stated Ted. "You see, we're inside the fort and we can't be hit so easily."

"That's so," assented Tom. "The party that storms the fort always has to be bigger than the one inside the walls."

By this time Harry and his chum Henry had drawn their forces up in battle array in front of the snow fort.

"Are you all ready, Ted?" asked Harry, who acted as captain on his side.

"Yes, we're all ready," Ted replied.

"But what about horse-chestnuts inside snowballs?" asked Tom.

"Well, what about 'em?" demanded Henry.

"We aren't using any, and it won't be fair for you fellows to," declared Ted. "You have more on your side than I have,

Harry, but that's all right, because we're in the fort. But you can't use hard balls."

"Who says we put horse-chestnuts in our snowballs?" demanded Henry Simpson.

"Charlie Dodd said so," reported Tom.

"We have not!" insisted Harry.

"I saw Jim Blake putting some nuts in the balls he made," declared Charlie, looking over the top of the fort and pointing his finger accusingly at a tall lad.

"Did you, Jim?" asked Harry.

"Aw, I only made a few balls with nuts in 'em," admitted Jim. "I didn't know it wasn't all right."

"Well, it isn't!" declared Harry. "We made it up that way. I'll chuck out all the hard balls," he promised Ted. "You show me which they are, Jim."

"Aw, you're a bunch of sissies!" complained Jim, who was a bit too old to be playing with Ted's crowd. But he pointed out the balls he had made which, on being broken open, proved to contain the hard, brown nuts, called horse-chestnuts in the East and buckeyes in the West and Middle West.

"Now, I guess we're ready," went on Ted.

“Get in the fort, all you fellows who are on my side.”

Tom, Charlie and half a dozen others got within the protection of the snow walls. Harry, Henry and the attacking fighters divided their forces, each boy taking several of the snowballs that had been brought to the scene of battle in small express carts, and also on sleds which had soap boxes nailed on them to hold the ammunition.

“All ready!” called Ted, when he saw that his army was prepared.

“All ready! Go at ’em!” shouted Henry.

With shouts, yells and laughter the attacking force charged toward the fort, throwing their white balls as fast as they could.

But to throw at their enemies, Ted and his chums had to stand up and look over the top of their fort, in order to aim straight, and it was when they stood up that they made targets of themselves so that several boys were hit by Harry and his crowd. However, more of the attacking force were struck than those inside the fort.

Back and forth the battle was fought. Now Harry and his gang would almost gain the walls, and when they should climb over

these the fort would be captured. But again and again they were driven back by a fierce volley of the white ammunition in the hands of Ted and his soldiers.

"Come on now, fellows! We just have to capture that fort!" cried Harry at length, when his force had been driven back several times. "We'll go over there," and he pointed to a pile of snow, "make a lot more balls and then we'll rush 'em!"

"Let's divide and fight 'em from two sides," suggested Henry.

"That's a good idea," agreed the captain of the attackers.

Soon, with a lot of additional balls, Harry and his party, divided into two squads, rushed at the fort.

"Get ready!" yelled Ted. "This is going to be a hard fight!"

Just as Harry, with half his soldiers, was rushing toward the fort preparing to throw volleys of balls, a small figure ran in between the attacking party and the fort. It was Trouble. He had found a stick he thought would be a good sword, and, waving this, he ran right into the danger zone, shouting:

"I'm a captain! I'm a captain!"

“Get back there, Trouble!” yelled Ted.
“You’ll get hurt!”

“Somebody get that kid!” shouted Harry.
“Look out, fellows, don’t hit him!”

But it was too late. Already the snowballs were flying back and forth, several falling close to William. He did not seem to understand his danger. True, the balls were not very hard, but he was a small boy and could easily be hurt.

“Stop throwing!” yelled Ted. But his voice could hardly be heard in the noise of laughter and shouting, for there was an attack on the other side of the fort, and the boys there knew nothing of Trouble’s difficulties. The little fellow himself seemed surprised to find so many snowballs falling around him, but he trudged on toward the fort, calling:

“I’m a captain! I’m a captain!”

Just then Janet Martin, Lola Taylor and some other girls came out of the house where they had been playing. In a glance Janet saw Trouble’s danger.

“Oh, William!” she cried. “You’ll be hurt!”

By this time the snowballs were flying back and forth thickly, for both sides were

so excited and so eager to win that they paid no heed to Ted's calls to stop.

Janet, however, did not depend on her voice. She believed in action. Into the midst of the fray, toward her small brother, she rushed, and, picking him up, much to Trouble's surprise and indignation, she carried him off the field of battle. But in doing this Janet received a snowball on the back of her neck, the white particles falling down inside her dress, giving her a cold and chilly sensation.

"Ouch!" she cried, not because she was hurt, but on account of the queer feeling.

It was this cry of Janet's and seeing several of her girl friends rush to her rescue and that of Trouble that brought about a stoppage of the snow battle.

"Don't fire at the girls!" yelled Harry.

"Stop shooting!" called Ted.

Several of the girls were hit, and some, catching up handfuls of snow, tossed them at the boys, though, with one exception, not with very straight aim. Janet was hit again; but she laughed, and was glad that she could protect Trouble. She hurried him into the house, despite the small boy's yells to the effect that he was a captain with a

sword and that he was going to take part in the battle.

The advent of the girls spoiled the snow fight, but the boys had had almost enough of it, and, as Ted said, it would probably be an even draw.

"We can have another fight this afternoon," suggested Tom Taylor.

"It ought to be our turn, then, to have the fort," said Harry.

"Yes, you can do that," agreed Ted. "We'll take the outside."

"Then let's go coasting now!" proposed Tom. "The hill's just dandy!"

With shouts and laughter, the crowd gave up the idea of a snow fight and hurried off to get their sleds or bobs. They assembled a little later on the hill not far from Ted's home.

Ted and his particular chum, Tom Taylor, had made a bobsled, consisting of a long plank with a clipper sled in front that could be steered by a wheel, and another clipper sled in the rear.

The boys were on the hill, having a lot of fun coasting down, when Janet and Lola came along. The girls arrived just as Tom and Ted were preparing to make a descent.

"Is Trouble all right?" asked Ted, as he pointed the bob down the hill.

"Oh, yes, he's all right. He's crying to come out, but mother has to change his clothes first. He's all wet."

"Want a ride?" invited Tom, and as Lola and Janet did, the two girls got on the sled between the two boys, Ted steering. Tom pushed off, and down the hill the bob glided amid the others of its kind and separate sleds.

"Doesn't it go fast!" cried Lola to Janet.

"Yes; but I like it. Oh, look out, Ted!" she called to her brother. "You're steering right into a big drift!"

"Watch how close I can come to it and miss it!" yelled Ted, with great confidence in himself.

But something went wrong. The front of the sled swerved to one side. There was a scream from Lola, another from Janet, a yell from Tom, and the next moment the bobsled struck a lump of ice, bounced up, tipped over, and Ted and Janet, who were in front, were tossed into the air, then into a big drift of snow, beneath which they disappeared.

Tom and his sister fell on the edge of the

hill, far enough out of the track of other sleds to be in no danger.

For a moment Tom was so shaken up and dazed that he did not know what had happened. Then he looked about him and did not see Ted and Janet.

"Where are they?" Tom asked his sister.

Lola was a bit "woozie," she said afterward, from the effects of her fall, but she pointed to the big bank of snow and said:

"They're under there!"

"Under that drift?" Tom demanded.

"Yes, under there!"

Tom staggered to his feet.

"We'll have to dig 'em out before they smother!" he exclaimed. "Hey, fellows!" he yelled to several other boys who were dragging their sleds and bobs up the hill. "Hi! We have to dig Ted and Janet out from under the snow! Come on!"

CHAPTER II

A LOST COOK-BOOK

TOM TAYLOR did not need to shout his news twice to have half the boys on the coasting hill gather about him. Ted and Janet Martin were favorites with most of the boys and girls of Cresco, where the Curlytops lived, and all were eager to help them.

Henry Simpson, who did not quite hear what Tom had shouted, caught the words "dig away the snow drift," and exclaimed:

"What's the good of digging that away? We have plenty of room to coast past it."

"Ted didn't seem to have enough room," answered Harry Morris, kicking his sled to one side and beginning to dig in the bank of snow. "He's under there!"

"Who's under where?" asked Henry, who did not yet understand what it was all about, though he saw several boys and girls, who had heard Tom's appeal, frantically scattering the snow.

"Ted and Janet Martin—the Curlytops—

are under that pile of snow!" shouted George Barr. "We have to get 'em out!"

"Sure thing!" cried Henry, now understanding, and he, too, fell to digging with a will.

There were no shovels on the hill, but some of the boys used their small sleds to dig away the snow. Others got boards from a near-by fence and used these. The girls simply used their hands. Lola Taylor, who was Janet's particular chum, was one of the most active.

"Oh, I hope Jan doesn't smother!" exclaimed Lola, almost crying at thought of her chum's danger.

"I don't see how they got away in under there," said Harry. "There isn't any hole where they went in."

"They just popped up into the air when the bob hit a big chunk of ice," explained Tom. "And when they came down they plopped into the snow bank, and I guess the snow caved in after them and closed the hole up that way."

"That must have been it," agreed Harry. "But we have to dig faster!"

The boys and girls were working with a will to rescue their friends, the Curlytops.

Ted and Janet Martin had gained this name because their heads were covered with clusters of golden, curly mops of hair. "Curlytops" seemed the proper name for the two, and it had stuck. Though Ted and Janet were older now, and were fast "growing up," as their mother often said, the name still clung to them.

Ted and his sister, with William, or "Trouble," the small brother, lived with their father and mother in a pleasant home in the town of Cresco in one of our Eastern states. Biscuit, the cat, was a new member of the family. Nora Jones, the maid, and Patrick, the man of all work, who sometimes drove the Martin automobile, had been in the household a number of years.

The children were first introduced in the initial volume of this series, entitled "The Curlytops at Cherry Farm; or, Vacation Days in the Country." In that story I told you of the many adventures of Ted, Janet and Trouble. Following that book are a number of others detailing the happenings of the Curlytops on Star Island, when they were snowed in, and on their trip to Silver Lake. At Sunset Beach they had a wonderful time, and in the book just before this

one, called "The Curlytops in a Summer Camp; or, Animal Joe's Menagerie," I related to you how Ted and Janet, to say nothing of Trouble, helped capture a number of monkeys, dogs, cats and other animals that escaped from Joe, who dealt in animal pets.

Since then several years had passed, and though the Curlytops were somewhat older and were growing up, still they were just as fond of fun as before. As for William, his name of Trouble seemed to stick to him, for he was always in some difficulty.

But no one was thinking of William now. All the boys and girls on the coasting hill were eagerly digging in the snow to get Ted and Janet out from beneath the drift. The snow flew in a cloud as hands, sleds and boards were used for digging.

"There's Jan! I see her head!" suddenly exclaimed Lola, who was now using some one's sled she had picked up. She was scraping the snow aside with it.

"Look out you don't bang her!" warned Tom.

"As if I would!" replied his sister. "Oh, Jan, are you hurt?" Lola asked eagerly, as her chum began to struggle out of the drift.

"No—no—I—I'm all right," was the

panting answer. "I just couldn't breathe for a moment. But I'm all right now!"

Willing hands helped Jan flounder out of the drift.

"Where's Ted?" she asked, looking around. "Didn't he go into the snow pile with me?"

"He sure did!" exclaimed Tom.

"Then where is he?"

Anxiously, many eyes scanned the snow bank, and then, all of a sudden, a voice answered:

"Here I am!"

Ted had crawled out of a hole on the far side of the drift—a hole down toward the bottom. He had floundered and struggled through the heap of white crystals, making a tunnel for himself.

Out he crawled, shaking the flakes off him, brushing them from his face and stamping them from his feet. Then he looked around until he saw Janet.

"Oh, so you didn't go in the snow with me!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, I did," his sister replied. "But they dug me out," and she motioned to the other boys and girls.

"Whew!" whistled Ted. "That was

fierce! I thought I'd never get out. Are you hurt, Jan?"

"No, I'm not. But the next time I ride on a bobsled with you, Ted Martin, you'll have to know how to steer! I don't like being run into a snow bank!"

"Aw, I couldn't help it!" apologized Ted. "I didn't mean to!"

"You really shouldn't have steered so close to the bank," observed Lola.

"I guess maybe I shouldn't," Ted admitted. "But I thought I could pass it; and so I could, only for that lump of ice in the way. The front bob hit that and swung me over."

"That's right!" chimed in Tom. "It wasn't exactly Ted's fault."

"Well, we went into the drift, anyhow, and there's a lot of snow down my back," said Janet. "Burr-r-r-r!" and she gave a little shiver. "It's cold!" she added, with a laugh.

Then, suddenly, Janet clapped her hand to her waist and a strange look came over her face. Ted noticed it and asked:

"Are you hurt inside somewhere, Jan?"

"No. But it's gone!" gasped his sister, and the look of alarm deepened on her face.

“What’s gone?” Lola inquired.

“Mrs. Bailey’s cook-book,” was the answer. “I had it under my coat when I got on the bobsled to ride down the hill. It must have slipped out when I went into the snow bank. Oh, dear! It’s lost! Mrs. Bailey’s cook-book!”

“It’s under the snow,” suggested Tom. “We can easily find it!”

He began kicking lumps and little piles of snow to one side. The other boys and girls joined him, while Janet looked anxiously all about. But she did not find what she had lost.

“Oh, dear!” she sighed again.

“What’s the use of worrying about an old cook-book?” asked Ted. “Mother will buy Mrs. Bailey a new one when you tell her you lost it. And, anyhow, we can find it when the snow melts in the spring.”

“But the book will be spoiled,” and Janet’s voice showed that she was almost ready to cry. “Besides, mother can’t buy another cook-book like this one for Mrs. Bailey!”

“Why not?” Lola asked.

“Because it was a special, private one. All the recipes in it were written out in hand

and with ink by Mrs. Bailey. She just lent it to mother to copy some of the best recipes. And now the book is gone! Oh, dear!" Tears came into Janet's eyes.

"We'll find that funny old cook-book!" declared Ted. "I'll get some fellows with shovels and we'll dig until we find it. And if we can't find it now, we can when the snow melts."

"Yes, maybe you can then," agreed Jan, with a little sob. "But it will be too late. The melting snow will make all the ink run and Mrs. Bailey can't read one recipe from another. Her book will be spoiled and she'll feel terrible. She told mother she wouldn't take a hundred dollars for that book! And I've lost it! Oh, I've lost it!"

Janet put her head down on her arms and cried hard.

CHAPTER III

AN UNEXPECTED PUPIL

"DON'T cry, Jan!" begged Ted in a low voice. He thought his sister was now too nearly grown up to do anything like this, especially in public. "We'll find that cook-book!"

"You can't!" wailed Janet. "You looked and you can't find it! And if you don't find it pretty soon the snow will make all the pages wet and—and the ink will spread and—oh! I wish I'd never got on the old bob!" she sobbed.

Ted looked serious and turned to Tom and his other chums.

"Fellows, we've just got to find that cook-book!" said Harry. "Come on! No more coasting until we dig it out!"

"That's the idea!" shouted Tom. "Everybody dig!"

While Lola and the other girls comforted Janet as well as they could, the boys kept on digging in the snow as fast as they had done

when they were trying to rescue the Curlytops.

"Mother told me to be very careful of that book," sighed Janet to Lola and the other girls as they watched the boys delving in the snow. "I said I would, but I forgot all about it when I got on Ted's bobsled. The book must have slipped out from under my coat when I was in the snow bank."

"Maybe it fell out half-way down the hill," suggested Mary Wilson. "Let's look. Come on!"

To this the girls all agreed, and they wandered up and down the coasting slope, their eyes searching for the cook-book. But in vain.

Nor were the boys any more successful. Though they fairly tore apart the drift in which the Curlytops had been prisoners for a time, no trace was found of the lost cook-book.

"Oh, dear!" sighed Janet, when Ted told her it could not be found.

"What will you do?" asked Lola, her arm around Janet's waist.

"I'll have to tell mother and she'll tell Mrs. Bailey, and she'll feel dreadful about

losing her choice cook-book. I know Mrs. Bailey will!"

"Maybe she has another one," suggested Ted as he walked along beside his sister. The Curlytops did not feel much like coasting after the accident and the loss of the book.

"No," answered Janet, "that's the only cook-book she had. She told mother so. And some of the recipes were very rare and priceless."

"What were they recipes of?" Tom, who, with Lola, had joined the Curlytops, asked.

"Oh, how to make cake, and pies and cookies and preserves, and jellies and jams and things like that," Janet answered.

"Pooh! My mother makes them without any book at all," Tom declared.

"She can do it because she once learned how out of a book," was Janet's answer. "That's what my mother wanted Mrs. Bailey's book for—to learn and to copy some of the recipes. And now it's gone!"

"We'll get it when the snow melts!" urged Ted.

"How many times must I tell you that the book will be spoiled by spring!" exclaimed Janet. "The wet snow and rain

will make the ink run. Oh, Ted, I don't mean to be cross," she went on, aware that she had spoken sharply and that Ted's face had flushed. "But I don't know what to do."

"The book must have slipped down in some sort of a hole and be covered with snow," was Tom's opinion, and Ted agreed with this.

Mrs. Martin looked serious when she heard of the loss of the cook-book.

"Mrs. Bailey will have to be told at once," declared the mother of Curlytops. "I know she has no copy of that book, but she may be able to remember most of the recipes. And if she does, I'll write them out for her. She must be told at once."

"Must I tell her?" faintly inquired Janet.

"Well, you lost the book," was Mrs. Martin's answer. "I begged you to be very careful of it when taking it back."

"I know, Mother, and if I hadn't gotten on Ted's bob—"

"I'll go and tell Mrs. Bailey about the loss of her cook-book," kindly volunteered Janet's brother. "She can't any more than eat me up!" and he grinned to make Janet feel better.

"I'll go with you," offered Tom. "Two are better than one when it comes to telling bad news. Maybe she won't make such a fuss if we tell her."

"Very well," agreed Mrs. Martin. "But say to her, Ted, that we will do all we can to find that book."

"Yes'm," Ted answered, leaving the bob-sled out near the garage while he and his chum prepared to break the bad news to Mrs. Bailey, who lived on the other side of town.

"It's awfully good of you, Ted, to go and tell her!" whispered Janet to her brother.

"Oh, shucks!" was all Ted answered. "It was in part my fault, anyhow, for trying to see how close I could steer the bob to the bank of snow. I guess Mrs. Bailey won't make much of a fuss."

But Mrs. Bailey was an enthusiast on the subject of cooking, and she set very great store on her pet cook-book.

"Dear me!" the elderly woman exclaimed when Ted and Tom, after considerable hemming and hawing, had broken the news to her. "My valuable hand-written cook-book gone! I can't believe it! How did it happen?"

The boys told her, and suggested that in the spring they could find the missing volume.

"Oh, but it will be spoiled then!" exclaimed Mrs. Bailey.

"Can't you, now, remember all the recipes?" suggested Ted.

"I can't remember one-quarter of them!" and she held up her hands against the thought. "No, not one-eighth of them!" Tom and Ted, who hated fractions, were wondering if Mrs. Bailey would go to sixteenths, and then to thirty-seconds, but beyond this they did not like to figure.

"There was one recipe for apple slump—" sighed Mrs. Bailey, as the greatness of her loss came back to her, "a recipe for apple slump that was famous all over this part of the country. I was the only one that had the recipe, and it's in the book and the book is lost! Oh, dear! Did you ever eat apple slump?" she suddenly asked the boys.

"Yes'm," Tom answered.

"It's very good," added Ted, and the boys had hopes that she was going to offer them some. But Mrs. Bailey went on with:

"Well, there was an apple slump recipe

in that book. I can't remember how it goes, but it was wonderful! And now it's lost. Look here, you boys," she went on eagerly, "did you ever eat angel cake?"

"Yes, ma'am!" said Tom quickly.

"I like it!" added Ted.

"Wait a minute!" went on Mrs. Bailey.

She went back into her house, and Ted whispered:

"I guess she's going to get us a piece of angel cake."

"I hope she does! Yum! Yum!" murmured Tom.

But when Mrs. Bailey came out she had on her coat and hat and her rubbers. She had an umbrella in her hand, but no cake, and she said:

"There was a recipe for angel cake in that book of mine that I wouldn't sell for ten dollars. Many's the prize I've taken at church sociables with angel cakes made from the recipe in my book! But I want you boys to show me just where in the snow my cook-book was lost. Maybe I can find it."

Tom and Ted looked at each other. They would have appreciated a piece of any kind of cake, not necessarily angel, but none was offered them. Together they shuffled along

through the snow, followed by Mrs. Bailey, and they helped her look for the book in what remained of the drift. Mrs. Bailey poked about with her umbrella and the boys poked and kicked with their feet, but the book was not to be found.

"Oh, dear!" sighed Mrs. Bailey, as she turned to go home. "I'm afraid my book is gone forever, and I'll never get another like it. Tell your mother, Ted, that I can't remember one-tenth of the different recipes. There was one for cheese pudding—but what's the use of talking?"

With a shake of her head she turned away, and as Tom and Ted walked on, the Curlytop boy said:

"I wish she hadn't talked so much about good things to eat. She made me hungry."

"Same here! Come on over to my house. I think my mother baked a cake. But she didn't make it out of a cook-book—she baked it out of her head. My mother's smart."

"So's mine!" declared Ted.

That night the story of Mrs. Bailey's lost cook-book was told in many Cresco households. All the ladies were sorry about it, for most of them had eaten of the good

things prepared according to the excellent and unusual recipes. It was only because Mrs. Bailey was very fond of the Curlytops' mother that she had allowed her to borrow the book. Usually she kept her ways of preparing food a secret.

"But it's gone, and that's all there is to it," said Teddy, relating at the supper table that night how he and Tom had broken the sad news to Mrs. Bailey.

"Was she very mad at me?" Janet wanted to know.

"Not so very," her brother answered. "She was talking so much about fractions—"

"Fractions?" inquired Mr. Martin. "I thought it was a cook-book that was lost, not an arithmetic."

"I mean," explained Ted, "that she kept saying she couldn't remember a quarter of the recipes for apple slump and cheese pudding, and then she said a sixteenth and I guess she would have got to a fiftieth if Tom and I had waited."

"You mustn't make fun of her," warned Mrs. Martin. "It was the fault of you and Janet that the book was lost, and—"

"I wasn't making fun, though it was

funny," said Ted. "Especially when she asked if we liked angel cake and then came out with an old umbrella to dig in the snow. But we didn't make fun."

"No, you must not," said his father. "And you must do all you can to find that book, Teddy boy."

"I will," he promised. "But I guess it isn't much use," he said later to his sister. Janet, however, said she was going to keep on looking until she found it.

However, the next day was Sunday, and no search was made then, though on their way to church the Curlytops could not help casting their eyes about as they went along the coasting hill. And on Monday morning there was school, and, of course, there was no time to look for missing cook-books.

"But we'll have a look after school this afternoon," Ted proposed to his sister.

"I hope we find it," murmured Janet.

Trouble did not go to school that day on account of the slushy condition of the streets, and also because it looked as if it would either snow or rain before afternoon. The little fellow remained at home, playing with his wooden sword and living over again the snow battle of Saturday.

It grew warmer after lunch, and, as the weather seemed clearing, Mrs. Martin let Trouble play out in front of the house when Ted and Janet had gone back to school.

Trouble was amusing himself in various ways, tramping through little piles of snow with his rubber boots, when he saw a dog coming along the street.

"Hello, Gyp!" he called, and the dog ran up to the little boy, wagging its tail. It was Tom Taylor's dog, and he and Trouble were friends.

"I guess you must be looking for Tom, aren't you?" asked Trouble, patting Gyp's head. "Well, Tom's at school, and so are Ted and Janet. I didn't go to-day, but I'll go now and take you so you can find Tom. Come on, Gyp!"

Gyp wagged his tail again and was very willing to go. Trouble walked along beside the dog in the direction of the school. It was not far away, and William knew how to get there very well indeed, often going alone, for there was not much automobile traffic in that part of Cresco.

"We'll go to school an' s'prise 'em!" chuckled Trouble. "Won't we, Gyp?"

Gyp's wagging tail was the only answer,

but Trouble seemed to understand and laughed again.

It was a few minutes later that the door of Miss Becker's classroom was pushed open, and in stepped Trouble and the dog just as Janet was reciting her reading lesson.

"Here's your Gyp, Tom!" called Trouble in a loud voice. "He wanted to come to school so I brought him! There's Tom, Gyp!" and the little fellow pointed out the Taylor lad, seated near Ted, while Miss Becker looked up in surprise and all the boys and girls began to laugh. Janet blushed a deep red and Ted half arose in his seat.

William was certainly living up to his name of Trouble!

CHAPTER IV

A SLIDE IN SCHOOL

MISS BECKER was a wise school-teacher, and she knew if she let matters go too far her class would get out of order and there would be no more lessons the rest of the day.

So, instead of scolding William for something the little fellow didn't really intend to do and instead of making her boys and girls stop laughing at once, Miss Becker walked over to Trouble, who stood in the doorway with the dog, and the teacher said:

“What a fine dog! Whose is he?”

At the sound of their teacher's voice the pupils at once became quiet. Even Gyp did not bark, but Trouble thought he must answer, so he said:

“He's Tom's dog and his name is Gyp, I mean the dog's name is Gyp.”

William said this so seriously that the children, including Ted and Janet, laughed again, until Miss Becker said:

“That's a very nice name, William. But

how did you happen to bring Gyp to my room?"

"I found him in the street," answered the small boy. "He wanted to come to school to see Tom, so I brought him."

Trouble did not explain how he knew Gyp wanted to come to school, and Miss Becker knew better than to ask him. She now had the children quieted down, and they did not think it so very strange to see a dog in school. Then the teacher went on:

"It was very kind of you, William. But I think Gyp would rather be out in the snow playing instead of in school. So will you please take him out again?"

"Yes, ma'am, I will!" Trouble quickly promised. "And it's snowing now and I guess there'll be a big storm," he added, looking out of the window.

It was true. A sudden storm had come up, and as Ted, Janet and the other pupils looked out they gave little gasps of delight. I don't know why it is, but every time boys or girls look out of a schoolroom window and see it snowing, it makes them feel happy. I know it did me and I suppose it does you. I think it is because there is so much fun to be had in the snow.

At any rate, everybody in Miss Becker's room seemed glad it was snowing, and when the teacher saw the big flakes coming down she looked at Ted Martin and said:

"Theodore, perhaps you had better go home with your little brother. Yes, take him home, Theodore." Miss Becker thought it best to give Teddy his longer name so as to be more formal and solemn, for she saw that her pupils might easily get started to laughing and giggling again unless she was rather sedate with them.

"Yes'm, I'll take Trouble home," answered Ted.

"I'll go with him to take my dog, if you want me to," eagerly offered Tom. It looked like a good chance to get out of school for half an hour in the middle of the afternoon, which always seemed the longest part of the day.

Miss Becker smiled a little. She easily saw through Tom's reasoning, but she was willing to give in to him. She knew Ted could easily take both William and the dog home, but perhaps it would be best to let the two boys go out. So she said:

"Very well, Thomas, you may take your dog home, and, Theodore, you may take your

little brother. But be sure to come back. You will get here about the time for the afternoon recess, and there will be an hour of school after that. So be sure to come back."

"Yes'm," promised Tom and Ted eagerly and both at the same time.

"Can't I stay here?" demanded William, and Janet could tell that one of his stubborn fits was coming on. So, before she thought, she spoke right out loud in school, saying:

"No, dear, you had better go with Ted, and maybe he and Tom will let you ride on Gyp's back!"

As soon as she had spoken, Janet realized that she had talked out loud without first raising her hand to get permission, so she clapped both palms over her lips. But it was too late—the words were out.

However, Miss Becker only smiled and said:

"That's all right, Janet. It was a good thing to tell your little brother that. Only I don't know that Gyp will let him ride on his back."

"Oh, yes'm, he will!" said Tom eagerly. "I'll hold him on. Gyp is strong!"

The chance for a dog ride was something

Trouble would not miss for anything. He was all smiles now as he put his arms around the neck of patient Gyp and murmured:

"I'm going to have a ride on you! And I brought you to school, didn't I?"

The children laughed again, and the teacher did not stop them. But she motioned for Tom and Ted to get on their coats and hats and take William and Gyp out, and this was soon done. After this the class settled down to work again, and Janet went on with her reading lesson.

But many of the pupils looked out of the window to see Tom leading his dog along the street near the school through the snow storm, while Ted held his small brother on Gyp's back. Nor did Miss Becker stop the children from looking out. She thought the sooner they got over with the unusual sight the more quickly would they get their minds back on their books.

Meanwhile Tom and Ted were very much enjoying their unexpected vacation from school.

"How did you come to think of bringing my dog to me, Trouble?" asked Tom.

"Oh, I just thought of it," William answered soberly, as he clung to the long, curly

hair on Gyp's back. "I think of lots of things," went on the small boy.

"I should say you did!" chuckled Ted. "But this was the best ever!"

He was going to add that he wished Trouble would bring the dog to school every day, but he did not think it quite wise. Trouble really might try to do it.

"Say, it's snowing hard!" cried Tom, kicking aside little drifts on the walk.

"It sure is," agreed Ted. "We can make a bigger fort."

"And it will make the coasting hill better," went on Tom. "Say, Ted," he asked, "did you find that cook-book your sister lost?"

"No, we didn't," was the answer. "I guess it's gone forever."

"I guess so," agreed Tom. "But maybe it will turn up in the spring when all the snow is melted. Where you going on your summer vacation, Ted?"

"I don't know yet. But say, didn't we have fun at the summer camp when we hunted Animal Joe's monkeys?"

"I should say we did!" exclaimed Tom.

"And I caught a fish!" broke in Trouble.

"You mean you caught a mud turtle!" laughed Ted.

By this time the boys had reached the Martin house and Trouble was taken in by his brother, much to the surprise of Mrs. Martin, who did not know William had gone off the street in front of the house, where he had been told to stay.

"I took Gyp to school!" William announced proudly. "And I had a ride home on his back."

Ted quickly explained to his mother what had happened. She smiled at Trouble and did not scold him much, for he had thought he was doing both Tom and Gyp a favor. Trouble cried a little when Ted started back for school, and wanted to go with him, but Nora, the maid, quieted the little fellow by promising to let him make some snow cream, and this pleased William.

Snow cream is made by stirring up in a bowl a beaten egg, some milk and sugar and vanilla flavoring. It is almost as good as ice cream, and doesn't take so long to make.

With William thus made happy, Ted hurried out into the storm again to meet Tom, who had fastened Gyp in his kennel. The two boys went back to school, sliding when-

ever they came to a smooth place, for they were in no hurry.

Sometimes they tried the same slide three or four times to make sure it was in good order and perfectly safe for any smaller children who might wish to use it a little later. In this way it took them longer to go back to school than it had to go home with Trouble and Gyp. And at last Ted remarked:

"I guess maybe we'd better run a little if we want to get to school by the time recess is over."

And as the school bell rang just then, Tom agreed, saying:

"I guess we had!"

The two reached the school yard just as the other pupils were going in after the recess, and several lads looked enviously at Ted and Tom, Henry Simpson remarking:

"Some fellows have all the luck!"

"Well, why don't you get a dog?" asked Tom, with a laugh.

"Or have a small brother who will come to school so you'll get sent out to take him home?" asked Ted.

"I wish I had!" murmured Harry Morris enviously.

By this time Miss Becker's pupils were inside the school corridor, where no talking was permitted, and so the boys became quiet and the girls stopped their whispering.

Tom and Ted marched to their seats, and Miss Becker was just going on with the remainder of the day's work in class when she looked down the rows of seats and noticed that Sam Black, one of the older boys, was not at his desk.

"Did any one see Sam leave the school yard?" the teacher asked.

No one answered for a moment. Ted was just going to say that he had seen Sam making some snowballs when the missing boy suddenly marched into the room.

"You are late coming back from recess, Sam," said Miss Becker gently. "Have you any excuse?"

"Yes'm," Sam answered, pausing in the aisle. "Mr. Power asked me to shut one of the outer doors. It was stuck by the snow."

"Oh, that is all right. Of course you will not be marked tardy for doing what the principal asked you to do. You may go to your seat."

Sam started for it, but before he could sit down his feet suddenly shot from beneath

him, and with a slide down he went to the floor with a loud crash. Miss Becker, who had gone to the blackboard to write out an arithmetic problem for the class, turned quickly to see what had happened. The girls gave gasps of surprise and the boys muttered exclamations.

"What happened?" asked the teacher.

"I fell!" answered Sam, getting up. "I slipped on some snow on the floor near my desk! And I know who put it there, too!" he cried angrily. "It was Ted Martin, and I'm going to fix him for it! He put snow on the floor right by my seat and made me slip! I'll fix you for that, Ted Martin!"

With clenched fists Sam advanced toward the Curlytop boy, whose desk was near by.

CHAPTER V

FIRE! FIRE!

"SAM BLACK!" called Miss Becker sharply. "Stop where you are, Sam!"

So commanding was her voice, and so stern were the eyes that looked at Sam, that he came to a sudden halt not far from Ted's seat. The Curlytop boy, feeling that he was going to be struck, had half risen in his seat to defend himself. Seeing this, Miss Becker said more quietly than she had spoken to Sam:

"Sit down, Theodore!"

"But," protested Ted, "he's going to hit me!"

"He will do nothing of the kind!" said Miss Becker firmly.

"Well, why'd he want to put snow on the floor where I'd step on it?" demanded Sam. "He made me fall down!"

"I did not!" indignantly cried Ted.

"Be quiet—both of you!" ordered the teacher. "Samuel, come up here!"

When Ted was back in his seat and Sam was up in front of the class, which was much surprised at the second interruption during the afternoon session, Miss Becker walked down the aisle toward Sam's desk.

There on the floor she saw a little trail of snow, and in it were the marks of the boy's shoes where they had slid along.

"Does any one know how this snow got here?" asked Miss Becker, looking around at the boys near Sam's now vacant seat.

"I didn't put it there," stated Ted. He did not like to be accused of such a thing.

"I don't believe you did," replied Miss Becker, with a smile. She looked around at the faces of her pupils. Lola Taylor, who sat in the first row of girls' seats, raised her hand.

"Yes?" asked Miss Becker. "What is it, Lola?"

"I think—I'm not sure—but I think that snow came out of Sam's coat pocket," went on Tom's sister. "I saw some drop out as he was coming up the aisle, and I think he stepped in it and slipped. Sam put that snow there himself!"

"I did not!" cried the boy up in front excitedly.

“Samuel!” chided Miss Becker. “Speak lower! You may not have intended to drop the snow there where you slipped on it, but did it come from your pocket?”

Sam, without answering, slowly put his hand in his pocket and a surprised look came over his face as he pulled out another snowball. There was a gasp of astonishment, like a subdued chorus, from the other pupils, and Miss Becker looked serious.

“Why did you bring snowballs into the room, Sam?” she inquired.

“Please, Miss Becker, I didn’t bring them in,” Sam declared. He was beginning to lose his blustering manner now, for he had been caught breaking one of the rules of the school.

“Do you mean to say you did not put those snowballs in your pocket?” asked the teacher.

“No’m, I didn’t do it. I was playing with snowballs at recess, but it was outside the yard where Mr. Power said we could do that if we wanted to. I didn’t make any balls in the yard and I didn’t put any in my pocket to bring into school.”

Sam spoke so earnestly that Miss Becker believed him, though she had to ask:

"How do you suppose snowballs got in your pocket, Sam, unless you put them in?"

"Well," he answered slowly, "we had a snowball fight, and I threw a lot of balls and there were a good many thrown at me. Maybe some of them stuck in my pocket. My pockets are big, you see."

He held the one that contained the second snowball partly open so Miss Becker could observe.

"I see," she said, with a smile. "Well, it might have happened that way, Sam. It is possible, of course. But how did the snowball fall out of your pocket to the floor where you slipped on it and fell?"

"My pocket has a hole in it," Sam explained. "And I guess when the snowball melted a little, after I'd come in here, it got smaller and fell out of the hole in my pocket. Like this you know."

He put the second snowball that he had taken out in such surprise back into his pocket. In an instant it fell through the hole and plopped to the floor up in front near the teacher's platform, much to the astonishment of the other pupils.

"I see, Sam," said Miss Becker, and she could not help smiling a little. "Well, per-

haps, after all, it wasn't your fault. The snowballs might have gotten into your pocket when you were playing. And, as you say, they probably melted until they were small enough to have dropped out of the hole. I'll excuse you for that, but it was not nice of you to accuse Theodore and threaten to strike him."

Sam said nothing to this charge. He hung his head, though, and, after a while, he mumbled:

"Well, I was mad, and I—I didn't think what I was saying. I—I'm sorry!" he blurted out.

"That is a manly apology and I'm sure Teddy will accept it," said Miss Becker, in a friendly voice. "Now, Sam, if you will kindly pick up the snow near your desk, and throw it out of the window, together with the second ball, we will go on with our arithmetic work. We have lost enough time."

Sam, with rather a glum look on his face, and not smiling as were some of the other boys, gathered up the snow and tossed it out of the window. The white flakes were still sifting down from the sky and, seeing them and realizing how they would soon cover the

ground deeper than it was already covered, Janet sighed and said to herself:

"I guess we'll never find Mrs. Bailey's cook-book now! But I couldn't help it! The book's gone and there's no use worrying about it, though I know every time Mrs. Bailey sees any of us Martins she'll be sure to talk about her loss!"

Mrs. Bailey, though good and kind in some ways, did not seem to get over losing her old cook-book, which had been in her family for a long time and which contained many recipes she and her mother before her had written out themselves.

"But, anyhow, I'm going to keep on looking," decided Janet.

Sam had cleaned up the snow, the window was closed, and Miss Becker again went to the board to write out some arithmetic examples for the class to solve. This part of the day was the least liked by Ted Martin. He did not care much for figuring out about a boy who had thirty-five cents and who wanted to buy some apples for a penny each, some pears for two cents and some oranges for five cents. How many did he buy and how much money did he have left?

"I'd rather be out playing in the snow

than doing this example," thought Teddy to himself, and doubtless a number of his chums thought the same thing.

But some of the pupils were good at arithmetic, especially Janet and Lola; and the two girls at once set to work figuring on the problem, trying to see who would be the first to solve it.

There was a friendly rivalry between Janet and Lola as to who could first get answers in the arithmetic class, and Miss Becker liked to see this, as it made the other pupils sharper, she thought. She wished some of the others were as clever as Janet and Lola in this, but it did not seem to be their way.

The room was rather quiet, for each pupil was intent on trying to find out how many apples, pears and oranges the boy would have bought. Now and then Sam Black laid aside his pencil and paper to rub his arm, which had struck the floor rather hard when he fell.

Ted risked being caught by the teacher, and with it the punishment of being kept in after school for talking in class, by leaning over when Miss Becker went to the door, to ask:

"Does it hurt much, Sam?"

"Yes, it hurts a lot. But it wasn't your fault."

"No, I didn't put the snow there," whispered Ted. Janet heard him, though Miss Becker did not, and the Curlytop girl raised a warning finger toward her brother.

The reason Miss Becker did not hear Ted's whispering was because the teacher had gone to the door of her classroom—the door that opened into the hall. And the reason Miss Becker went to the door was because she heard a little tapping on it.

"I do hope that isn't the Curlytops' small brother with that dog again," thought Miss Becker, as she went quietly to the door. "Enough has happened this afternoon, with Gyp coming to school and Sam Black slipping on snowballs that fell out of a hole in his pocket. I hope nothing else happens."

She opened the door, wondering who had tapped so lightly, and saw Miss Northrup, the teacher in the next room, standing out in the hall.

"Don't say anything," whispered Miss Northrup; "but don't you smell smoke?"

At once Miss Becker began to sniff.

"Yes, I certainly smell smoke," she replied in a low voice.

"That's what I thought. I've been smelling it for the last five minutes, but I didn't want to say anything until I was sure. I wonder if there can be a—"

Just then there was a clanging of bells throughout the whole school, and from somewhere an excited voice shouted:

"Fire! Fire!"

Miss Becker closed the door and hurried back into her room.

"Oh, there's a fire!" gasped Janet. "I smell smoke!"

"So do I!" murmured Lola Taylor.

"Quiet!" sternly ordered the teacher. "Get ready for the fire drill! It is just a fire drill such as we have every week," she went on, with a smile. "Attention, everybody! Ready! Rise! Get ready to march out. The girls will go first!"

CHAPTER VI

THE ICE BOAT

VERY orderly, indeed, but with anxious looks on their faces and glancing often toward the door, through which came that smell of smoke, constantly growing stronger, the girls in Miss Becker's room marched out. Janet Martin led them, as she had often done before in fire drills. And not a little proud was Janet of this post of honor.

"Heads up! March slowly!" said Miss Becker to her girl pupils as they walked past her desk where she stood calmly. "I want you to be the best marchers in the line. I am depending on you, Janet, to lead them," the teacher went on.

"Yes'm," Janet answered, and she held her head very high and marched as nearly as she could as she thought a soldier would march in the face of danger.

For that there was some danger the girls and boys in Miss Becker's room believed. Never before, in all the fire drills that had

been held, had there been a smell of smoke. True enough, the ringing of the alarm bell, which told every pupil in the school to get ready to march out, was startling, but always before this the boys and girls had thought of it as only a drill, and rather fun at that.

"Oh!" gasped Lola Taylor when she was outside of the room, marching just behind Janet through the hall. "Isn't that smoke terrible!"

"It's choking!" added Mary Wilson.

"It's just like a real fire!" went on Lola. "Oh, do you s'pose there could be a fire?" she asked.

Several other classes of girls were now in the hall—girls from other rooms. Some of these pupils were very small, being in the first grade. The boys would march out last, as they would from Miss Becker's room. This was always the way it was done.

As Janet looked at the faces of some of the smaller girls, she saw that they had heard Lola's rather loudly spoken words and that they were beginning to get frightened. Then Janet acted like a brave little girl.

"Of course there isn't a fire!" she declared loudly. "The janitor just let the

furnace smoke a little to make it seem more real for the fire drill, you know."

"Oh, do you think so?" asked Lola.

"Sure!" answered Janet, with a laugh, though she did not feel much like laughter as she led her classmates down the corridor toward the front doors of the school.

What Janet said had its effect. Several of the smaller girls heard her, and though the smoke was now thicker, so that some of them coughed, several voices were saying:

"It isn't a real fire at all!"

"That smoke is just to make it seem real! Like the movies, you know."

And as the smaller girls marched on, Janet could not help feeling a little proud that she had helped quiet the fears of the smaller girls and probably kept them from running out of the building in a panic.

Meanwhile nearly all the girls in the school were now marching through the corridors. Some were already outside the building. In Miss Becker's room, as soon as the last girl was out, the teacher snapped her fingers and looked at the rows of boys standing erect near their desks.

"Attention! Ready!" sharply called Miss Becker. "You will march out quietly

when I give the word. And I want—" A wisp of smoke, heavier than any of those that had up to this time blown into the room, floated around the teacher's head, and she coughed a little before she could go on. But, continuing, she said:

"I want Theodore Martin to come and stand by my desk and help me watch to see which of my boys is the best marcher. Teddy will be my assistant captain. Come here, please, Teddy," and she smiled, though tears were now coming into her eyes from the thick smoke.

Proud of the honor placed upon him, Teddy marched up to Miss Becker's side and stood near her desk. Again she snapped her fingers.

"Ready! March!" she ordered, and the boys, led by Tom Taylor, began to file out of the room, which was now hazy with smoke. Stiff and straight, the boys marched under the eyes of Ted and Miss Becker, and you may be sure every one of them conducted himself like a little soldier. They were not going to slump or shuffle or stoop over while marching past Ted Martin! No, indeed!

The last boy in line was now out in the hall. Anxiously, Miss Becker watched them,

as other teachers in other rooms were anxiously watching their pupils march out. And then Miss Becker turned to Teddy and said:

“We will go now.”

Politely Teddy stepped aside for his teacher to leave the room ahead of him, but she gently said:

“I must go last, Teddy boy. That is the rule of the fire drill, you know. The teacher, like the captain of a ship, must be the last to leave the room.”

“Oh—all right,” Teddy answered. But as he reached the hall, a little in advance of Miss Becker, and saw the last of the boys of his room filing down the corridor and saw and smelled the thick smoke, which smarted his eyes and made him cough, Teddy said:

“I guess this is more than just a fire drill, Miss Becker.”

“I’m afraid it is, Teddy,” she answered.

Then the Curlytop boy felt sure that the whole school was burning. But thanks to the fire drill, which was held each week, every boy and girl was getting safely out of the schoolhouse.

And those pupils who had thought it was only the usual drill were much surprised

when, getting to the street, each one safe and sound, they saw several fire engines in front of their building, and noticed thick smoke pouring out of the cellar windows.

"Oh, it's a real fire!" cried one of the smaller boys, for now the children were all out, scattering about, though herded to safe places by their teachers.

"It's a real fire!" shouted another lad.

Every one could speak now, there being no rules against talking in the street.

"Sure it's a real fire!" declared Teddy Martin. "I knew it was before I came out of our room."

Several of the steamers were puffing away, for the fires had been started under their boilers as soon as the firemen got within sight of the school and saw the cloud of smoke.

A large crowd had now collected, many anxious fathers and mothers having rushed to the building as soon as the news spread that the school was on fire. But there was no panic, for it was soon known that every pupil and teacher was safely out.

"Oh, but what about our books?" asked Janet, as she stood in a little group with her

brother, Tom and his sister and some of their friends.

"I don't care if all my books burn!" declared Sam Black.

It was still snowing hard, but before the children marched out each boy and girl had put on outdoor wraps, so that no one felt the cold. They now stood about watching the firemen.

"Look at the firemen on the roof!" suddenly exclaimed Ted, pointing to several of the rubber-coated figures on top of the schoolhouse.

"I guess they're going to chop a hole in the roof so they can squirt water inside," suggested Tom Taylor.

"They're doing something to the chimney," said Janet, and this seemed to be the truth of the matter.

"Maybe Santa Claus left his empty sack in there after he gave out all the presents at Christmas!" suggested Sam Black, with a laugh.

Evidently the firemen were trying to get something out of the chimney. For they could be seen poking down it with their long poles. Smoke was still pouring from the cellar windows, and a little from the upper

classroom casements. Then the firemen on the roof gave a sudden shout, and the crowd, looking up, saw a cloud of smoke come out of the chimney, where, before, there had been none.

"That was it!" exclaimed Teddy. "The chimney was stopped up!"

"Guess you're right," agreed Tom. "See! There's hardly any smoke coming out of the cellar windows now!"

This was true enough, and word soon went round in the crowd that there was no fire after all. The chimney had become stopped up with a lot of snow that had drifted in, and which, partly melting, had frozen into a chunk of ice. The heat from the flue was not enough to melt this ice, and with more snow from the present storm blowing in, there was no hole for the smoke to get out.

So the smoke, instead of going up the chimney, had poured out into the boiler room, and then gradually filled the halls upstairs and drifted into the rooms. The janitor guessed the cause of the trouble and told Mr. Power, the principal.

"Call the engines, to be on the safe side," Mr. Power had told the janitor. "and I'll sound the fire drill signal."

So it had all come about. There was no danger at all, except from the smoke which had made eyes smart, and in a short time after the chimney had been cleared out by the firemen, the smoke drifted from the cellar, halls, and rooms and everything was all right.

"Oh, have we got to go back to our classes?" asked Tom, when he and the others heard the assembly bell ring. "What's the use?"

"You are just going back to get your books, so you can study your lessons for to-morrow," said Miss Becker, with a smile, as she heard what Tom said. "School is over for the day. I doubt if we could stay in the rooms long, with the strong smell of smoke in them. But by to-morrow it will be gone."

"Oh, then it's all right!" Tom said. "No more school to-day! Hurray!"

Back into their rooms filed the boys and girls, just as they did when an ordinary fire drill was over. The engines turned about and went back to their quarters. There had been no need of pumping water. The crowd dispersed and quiet once more settled over the school.

Miss Becker told her pupils to gather up

their books and march out. There was only about a half hour more of school time left, so not much would be wasted.

"I want to say that I am proud of my boys and girls," said Miss Becker, as she dismissed Janet, Ted and the others. "You were among the best marchers in the school. Thank you! And don't be late to-morrow!"

Such an eager, excited crowd of boys and girls as piled out of the school after the fire drill, which was the first real one ever held, you never saw! Nothing was talked of but the stopping up of the chimney, the calling of the engines, and of how the firemen knocked out the snow and ice with long poles.

And in every home in Cresco that night the story of what had happened at the school was told over and over again.

"I wish I had been there!" said Trouble, when he heard what he had missed on account of staying home from school.

"What would you have done?" asked his father.

"I'd have helped put out the fire with my engine," Trouble said. He had a toy fire engine that, when it worked, squirted a little stream of water.

"But there wasn't any real fire," Janet said. "It was only smoke."

"Then I'd have put out the smoke!" declared Trouble. And he didn't care when the Curlytops laughed at him.

In spite of Miss Becker having told her pupils to be at school early the next day they might just as well have stayed home. For it was found that the smell of smoke was so strong through the building that it was unpleasant to remain in it. A good airing was needed, and the school commissioners decided to have the chimney cleaned. So a vacation was declared until the following Monday, and I suppose there was not a boy or girl in all Cresco who was sorry about it.

"Now we can have some fun!" cried Ted to Tom as they walked back after having been told by Miss Becker there would be no school for several days. "What'll we do?"

"Let's go skating!" suggested Tom. "They've cleared part of the lake."

"All right!" agreed Ted.

There was a small lake just outside Cresco where the boys and girls had great sport. And though the snow storm, which had not lasted as long as had been expected, had covered the ice, a good section of it had soon

been cleared by scrapers drawn by teams of horses. The park commissioners of Cresco attended to this.

"Can we come with you?" asked Janet of her brother, when she heard him and Tom talk of going skating.

"Sure!" he answered, and Tom nodded an assent to his sister.

The four chums were soon gliding about on the ice, which was slowly being worn smooth by the steel runners of many other boys and girls who were taking advantage of the unexpected holiday.

"Let's have a race!" suggested Ted to his chum when they had circled about aimlessly for a time.

"If we race you boys, you ought to give us a head start," said Jan.

"We aren't going to race you girls," declared Ted. "Maybe we will later," he went on, as he saw a disappointed look on his sister's face. "But this first race is for Tom and me. I'll beat you down to that point!" he said to his chum, indicating one about a quarter of a mile away.

"All right!" agreed Tom. "Get ready!"

The two stood on a line that Ted drew on

the ice with the point of his skate. Janet counted:

“One, two, three! Go!”

Off the two darted, keeping even for some little distance. Then Ted began to forge ahead. He was skating hard, bent over, his head down, and was half way to the point, with Tom not far behind him, when Janet suddenly exclaimed:

“Oh, the ice boat! Look out for the ice boat! It’s going to bump right into them!”

“Look out, boys!” Lola screamed, as she saw, at the same instant as did her chum, an ice boat sweep out of a cove and head straight for the two boys, who did not seem to see it. Blown by a brisk wind, the ice boat appeared about to swoop straight at Ted and Tom.

CHAPTER VII

A STRANGE QUESTION

“LOOK! Look!” screamed Lola again. “It’s going to knock Tom and Ted right over! Oh, what a mean thing to do! Why doesn’t the man on it steer away? He’ll spoil the race.”

Then Janet looked more closely at the boat with its white sail and with steel runners that cut into the ice, sending splinters from it in a shower on the frosty air.

“There’s nobody on that boat!” exclaimed Janet.

“What’s that?” asked Lola.

“There’s nobody on it at all!” repeated Janet. “It’s a runaway ice boat, and that’s what makes it go so funny, shooting this way and that!”

“So it is—a runaway!” agreed Lola, as the boat, turning broadside to the girls, gave them a good view of it. “Nobody is on it!”

“But there comes somebody after it!” went on Janet, pointing to several men and

boys who now came running out of the cove after the speeding craft.

The boat was sliding first one way and then the other as the sail, with no one to hold it, was slapped from side to side. The rudder, too, was free to point as it pleased, and this made the captainless craft jib about in an alarming way.

Up to this time the two skaters had been so intent on their race that they had not seen the danger behind them. But now the screams of the girls and the shouts of the men and boys came to the ears of Ted and Tom. Tom was slowly creeping up on his rival when he happened to glance back of him.

"Ted!" he shouted. "Look what's coming!"

By this time the Curlytop lad was aware that something was wrong, and he slowed up to look back.

"An ice boat!" he yelled.

"And it's heading for us!" added Tom. "That fellow steering it must be crazy!"

Indeed the boat did come quite close to the boys, who had now given up the idea of a race. If the boat had hit them it would have knocked them down and probably hurt them.

But just when the boat seemed about to smash into Ted and Tom, who stood close together, and when they began skating as fast as they could to get out of the way, the craft suddenly turned off on another course and passed harmlessly by, though so close to the lads that they were showered with ice splinters from the steel runners.

"Well, of all the crazy—" began Ted. Then as he whirled about and the boat flashed past him and his chum, he heard Tom cry:

"There's nobody on it!"

"That's right!" agreed Ted, who now likewise saw that no one was steering the craft. "It's a runaway!"

"Come on!" urged Tom. "Let's try to get it. Maybe the fellow who owns it will give us a ride."

It was not a very safe thing to do—to skate after a runaway ice boat—but, as it turned out, no harm resulted, for the wind began to blow harder and the boat increased its speed so much that it was soon beyond any possibility of Tom and Ted catching it.

By this time several of the men and boys who had skated out of the little cove were close to Tom and Ted, and the Curlytop lad

and his chum joined in the chase after the runaway boat. Meanwhile Janet and Lola, having seen the ice boat glide past their brothers, were no longer alarmed.

"There's no use chasing after that," Ted remarked, as he saw how fast the boat was being blown toward the other side of the lake. "It will run up on shore and stop itself."

"I guess so," agreed Tom. "Let's finish our race."

This the boys did, Ted winning by a small margin. Then as they went back to join the girls they saw the crowd surround the ice boat which, as Ted had predicted, had run into a snow bank on the other shore of the lake and there halted.

"Whose boat is it?" asked Janet, when she and Lola were skating with their brothers.

"I heard somebody say it belongs to Jason Needham," said Tom. "It's a new boat and he doesn't know much about it yet. That's why it got away from him."

Afterward the Curlytops and their friends learned that Jason, a young man of Cresco, had recently bought the *Swallow*, as the boat was called, and that this was the

first time he had tried it. He left the sail up and did not tie the boat while waiting for some friends to come for a ride with him, and in that way the craft had gone off by itself.

For the remainder of the day the Curlytops and their friends had fun on the ice. In the afternoon Trouble was allowed to go out with Janet and Ted. He could not skate very well, but his brother and sister took turns pulling him on his sled, and this he enjoyed very much.

On the way home that afternoon, happy with their day of pleasure on the ice, Ted and Janet passed the house of Mrs. Bailey, who was a widow, living with her son, Joseph, who was about eighteen years old. Mrs. Bailey, who was at her front window, saw the Curlytops passing and beckoned to them to wait a minute.

"I wonder what she wants?" murmured Ted.

"I think I can guess," sighed Janet.

And, sure enough, when Mrs. Bailey came out on the porch she asked:

"Have you found my cook-book yet?"

"No'm, we haven't," Ted answered for his sister.

"Have you looked carefully?"

"Oh, yes!" exclaimed Janet. "I've looked and looked again! But I'll try it once more, Mrs. Bailey. I'm going past the snow bank where I was upset, and I'll look again."

"It won't be of any use," said Ted, in a low voice.

"I wish you'd find my book," went on Mrs. Bailey, somewhat complainingly. "I know you couldn't help losing it, Janet, and you didn't mean to. But the recipes were written out by hand—some by my grandmother. I can't remember a tenth, no, not a twentieth of those wonderful recipes."

"There she goes again—on those old fractions!" muttered Ted.

Not hearing him, Mrs. Bailey kept on with:

"Did you children ever eat chocolate cocoanut cake?"

"Only once," Janet answered. By this time Ted knew better than to expect that a question like this was a preface to being offered some of the cake in question. And he was not much disappointed when the widow went on:

"Well, there was a wonderful recipe for chocolate cocoanut cake in that cook-book of

mine. I'd make one of those cakes now, but I'd be sure to go wrong without the book. I wish you'd find it!"

"I wish I could!" sighed Janet.

On the way home she and Ted stopped at the snowdrift where the bobsled had upset and looked about for a sign of the missing book. But of course it wasn't to be found, and Janet again sighed dismally.

"Never mind," Ted said, trying to console his sister. "There's a moon to-night. Tom and I are coming out coasting and I'll look for the book then. We're not going to use the bob, but our little sleds, so I can look without making Tom wait."

"If you can't find it now, how can you find it by moonlight?" asked Janet.

"I don't know, but I'll have a look," offered her brother.

"Maybe if you took your flashlight you could find it," suggested William, from the sled.

"Maybe!" chuckled Ted. "I'll have a look when I come coasting to-night, anyhow."

He did look, between times of scooting down the hill and toiling up with Tom and

his boy chums. But there was no cook-book to be seen in the piles of snow.

"What you looking for?" asked George Perkin, a boy who sat in front of Ted in school.

"Oh, an old cook-book my sister lost when she was taking it back to Mrs. Bailey," Ted answered.

"A cook-book!" exclaimed George, and he seemed much interested. "Say, Ted, did you ever offer to pay anybody for that book?"

"Pay anybody? What do you mean?"

"I mean pay—like a reward."

"Why, no, I never thought of such a thing," Ted replied. "What makes you ask that?"

"Oh, I just asked, that was all," answered George, with a laugh. Then he jumped on his sled and coasted downhill, leaving Ted very much puzzled at the strange question.

CHAPTER VIII

JANET HEARS SOMETHING

FOR a few moments the Curlytop lad stood on top of the coasting hill looking at the other boys going down in the moonlight. There were no girls out on the hill now, as it was late. Janet had not come out at all, as she and Lola, with their mothers, had gone to a moving picture show that evening.

"I wonder what George meant by asking if I'd ever offered a reward to get back Mrs. Bailey's cook-book," observed Ted to himself.

He was now almost alone on top of the hill. He looked down toward the big heap of snow into which he and Janet had been plunged when the bobsled upset—the day the cook-book was lost in the drift.

"I wonder what he meant," mused Ted again. "I'll ask him when he comes up again."

But George had taken his last coast for the evening, it transpired, and did not again

come up to the top of the hill, though Ted waited there for him several minutes. Then he asked Tom Taylor, who came trudging up dragging his sled:

"Where's George Perkin?"

"Oh, he went home," Tom answered. "He said he'd had enough. He started home when I was coming up."

"Maybe I can catch him!" exclaimed Ted, flinging himself down on his sled and rapidly coasting down the hill.

"What you want of him?" called Tom to his chum, but Ted did not answer.

Arriving at the bottom of the hill, the Curlytop lad looked around for a sight of the other boy, but George had hurried off.

"I'll ask him at school to-morrow," decided Ted, and then he happened to think there would be no school on account of the smoke that had filled the schoolhouse. "Well, I'll see him on the hill, or maybe skating," decided Ted.

When he got home that night Janet started to tell her brother about the moving picture show, but she broke off to exclaim:

"What's the matter, Ted?"

"Matter?" he inquired. "Nothing. Why?"

"You aren't listening to me at all," re-

plied Janet. "Did something happen on the coasting hill to-night?" she went on eagerly. "Did you run into somebody and knock him down?" This had once happened to Ted.

"No, I didn't do that," he answered.

"Well, something happened," declared Janet. "I can tell by your face. You didn't even hear what I said about the movie, did you?"

"No, I guess I didn't," admitted Ted.

"Well, what happened?" went on Janet, a bit impatiently.

"Oh, nothing much," her brother replied. "It was just something George Perkin said."

"Tell me!" eagerly begged Janet.

"Jan," began Ted, not directly answering her question, "do you think Mrs. Bailey would offer a reward for her cook-book?"

"A reward!" exclaimed the Curlytop girl excitedly. "Theodore Martin, you don't mean to say you've found that book and are holding it for a reward!"

"Oh, no! Of course not! Nothing like that!" Ted answered quickly. "But on the hill, a little while ago, George Perkin asked if we had offered to pay for getting the book back."

"Pay for it?" asked Janet.

"He said he meant a reward," Ted went on. "But when I asked him why we should give a reward, he wouldn't say any more and he went on home. I'm going to ask him more about it, though."

"Of course!" agreed Janet. "It's very funny. Why would we give a reward for Mrs. Bailey's cook-book?"

"Oh, I suppose," suggested Ted, "that when you lose anything you say you'll give a reward to get it back. And if you lose something that belongs to somebody else, and they make a fuss about it, as Mrs. Bailey is making over her cook-book, then the person who lost it ought to give a reward for finding it. I guess that's what George meant."

"I guess so, too," chimed in Janet. "Oh, Ted!" she eagerly exclaimed, "do you suppose George found the book and he's keeping it to get a reward?"

"Maybe. I'll ask him to-morrow."

"I wish it was to-morrow now," sighed Janet. "I'm sure Mrs. Bailey thinks it was all my fault that her book was lost. I would like to get it back for her. I've got a little money in my bank, Ted. Tell George I'll

give him that if he will give me back the book."

"I will. And I'll help pay the reward because I helped you lose the book. But I think George ought to give us the book back without any reward."

"I think so, too," agreed Janet. "Maybe he will if I ask him. Let me ask him, Ted! He might be ashamed to charge a girl a reward."

"All right," Ted assented, after thinking it over. "You can ask George. He's a friend of mine and he'll be nice to you."

"I like George," said Janet, and she went to bed that night to dream that she had to pay a reward of all the money in her bank to George Perkin for the missing cook-book and that the boy had then spent the money for toy balloons which he tied to himself and Janet, taking the two of them up in the air.

Janet awoke with a start from this dream, and was much disappointed to find it was only a vision. But she dressed quickly, and after breakfast, telling only Teddy her plans, she started for the Perkin home, which was not far away.

But when she got there George had gone. His mother said he had taken advantage of

the holiday, caused by the closing of the school, and had gone to Lakeville, a city about ten miles from Cresco, to visit his cousin.

"Did you want to see George about anything special?" asked Mrs. Perkin. "Did your brother Ted send you?"

"Yes, Ted sent me," Janet answered, but she did not know whether or not to tell Mrs. Perkin about the queer question George had asked.

However, Janet was spared this, for just then the telephone rang and Mrs. Perkin, who was standing on the front steps, talking to the Curlytop girl, had to hurry inside to answer it, so she did not press her question about why it was Janet had called.

"George will be back Monday," his mother said, as she closed the door.

"I'll see him then," Janet remarked. But she was much disappointed. She felt sure George knew something about the missing cook-book.

Puzzling over the matter and wondering why George wouldn't give up the book, if he had it, without a reward, Janet wended her way back home. As she was passing Mrs. Bailey's house the widow saw her and

knocked on the window for Janet to stop, which of course the Curlytop girl did.

"Are you coming to bring my cook-book, Janet?" asked Mrs. Bailey, kindly enough. She had never been cross or impatient with the children for losing it.

"No'm, I haven't your book. I'm sorry," Janet said. "I was just over to see George Perkin, but he's gone to Lakeville, and—"

"Lakeville!" exclaimed Mrs. Bailey quickly, giving Janet no chance to explain why she had gone to see George. "Lakeville! Why, that's where my boy Joe works!"

"Does he?" asked Janet, not much interested, for Joe was much older than Ted and the two hardly knew each other, except to speak casually in the street.

"Yes, Joe has been working in a store in Lakeville for some time now," went on the widow. "He's got a good job, too. A better job than Peter Mordant has now."

"Oh, does Peter Mordant work in Lakeville, too?" asked Janet.

"He did," answered Mrs. Bailey, with a queer smile. "But he doesn't any more. He's home here now in Cresco, and I guess he's looking for a job."

"That's too bad!" exclaimed Janet, but, to tell the truth, she was not much interested. She knew Jess Mordant, Peter's sister, and did not like her, for Jess was what Janet and her chums called "stuck up." As for Peter Mordant, he had been a sort of bully around town, and, more than once, had been very unkind to Ted, Tom and their chums.

"It serves Peter Mordant just right!" went on Mrs. Bailey. "He used to work in the same place with my Joe, but Peter was jealous of Joe and tried to play some underhand tricks on him. The result was that Peter was discharged about two weeks ago and he's been home since, without a job. But it was his own fault. If he hadn't tried to be tricky with my Joe it never would have happened."

"Did they have a quarrel?" asked Janet, still not much interested, but not wishing to be so impolite as to walk on while Mrs. Bailey was talking.

"Yes, they had a quarrel," replied the widow who owned the cook-book. "But it was all Peter Mordant's fault, and he has only himself to thank that he hasn't a job

now. It's silly of him to blame Joe for being discharged."

"Does he?" asked Janet.

"Yes, he does. But I didn't stop you to tell you that. Only your mentioning that George Perkin had gone to Lakeville made me think of it. What did George go to Lakeville for—to get work?"

"Oh, no, he's too young to work," said Janet. "He went to visit his cousin. I was going to ask him something about—"

But Mrs. Bailey was not yet talked out, and she now went on with:

"It's too bad you can't find that cook-book of mine, Janet! I'm lost without it! I can't remember a hundredth part of the recipes I need. There was one for sour-cream cake that I want very much now. I'm afraid to try such a cake without my book. I wish you could find it."

Janet was going to say that perhaps if a reward was offered the book might be given up by some one who had it when Mrs. Bailey gave a sudden exclamation and hurried back into the house, calling out:

"Oh, my goodness! My pudding is burning! I smell it! That's what comes of not having my cook-book! Oh, dear!"

Janet did not stop, but hastened on home. She told Ted about George's being away, and the Curlytop lad declared he would see the other boy on Monday.

"I heard something else, too," went on Janet, and she related what Mrs. Bailey had told her about Joe and Peter.

"Oh, that Pete Mordant!" exclaimed Ted. "I don't like him. I've seen him around town lately and I wondered what he was doing, as I'd heard he had a job in Lakeville. He's been out coasting two or three times, and he's always wanting to borrow somebody's sled. It's a wonder he wouldn't get one of his own!"

"I should think so!" agreed Janet. She little thought that what she had heard about Joe Bailey and Peter Mordant would have anything to do with the missing cook-book, but it did.

CHAPTER IX

PIRATE TROUBLE

THOUGH the boys and girls of Cresco had thought at first that their vacation from school, on account of the smoke, was a good long one, they had so much winter sport that the break seemed very short indeed, and it appeared no time at all until Monday morning came around again, when the Curlytops and the others, including William, who was eager to get back to his kindergarten, started for their classes.

"I'll see George Perkin now and ask him what he meant by speaking of a reward for the lost cook-book," decided Ted.

"I'll ask him if you want me to," offered Janet.

"No, I'll ask him first," decided her brother. "If he won't tell me then you can ask him."

But their plans came to nothing, for George was not at school that morning, and at recess Janet, inquiring of his sister,

learned that George had been taken ill when visiting his cousin in Lakeville and might not be back at school again that term. He was going to remain with his cousin.

"Oh, dear!" exclaimed Janet when she told Ted this. "Now we'll never find out what he meant."

"Yes, we may," her brother answered. "Daddy often drives the auto over to Lakeville on business, and maybe some Saturday we can go with him and see George and ask him."

"Oh, maybe!" eagerly agreed Janet. "But I should think if he knew something about that cook-book having been found he would tell somebody else, even if he wouldn't tell us, and maybe somebody else knows about it."

"I'll ask some of the fellows," Ted promised.

This he did at noon, when walking home from school with some of the boys, and again at the afternoon recess and when school was out for the day. Ted did not state the matter exactly. He hinted around about it, speaking of the lost cook-book, asking his chums if any of them had heard of its being found.

"What do you think of a reward being given for the book?" Ted inquired.

"'Tisn't worth it!" declared Sam Black. "It's only an old book, anyhow!"

"Mrs. Bailey thinks a lot of it," declared Ted. "And maybe my sister and I would give a reward for it if we could get that book back."

"How much would you give?" asked Henry Simpson.

"Oh, maybe a dollar," answered Ted. He did not want to be too exact.

The winter days passed. There were more snow storms, followed by warm, pleasant days, and then cold ones when there was fine skating on the little lake. The young man whose ice boat had run away got the craft repaired and went swiftly scooting about the place. Once he gave the Curlytops a ride and Ted and Janet told him how nearly the boat had crashed into Tom and Ted.

But the snows came less and less frequently. The days gradually grew warmer, the sun began to climb higher north in the sky, and all signs pointed to spring.

"And then will come summer and what fun we'll have then!" exclaimed Janet, as she danced around the house.

"Maybe we'll go camping again!" echoed Ted.

"Summer isn't here yet," remarked Mrs. Martin, with a smile. "We are hardly into spring."

But a few days later, when a series of rain storms set in and the air was warm and mild, the children felt sure that summer was just around the corner, so to speak.

"These are the spring rains," their mother said.

The Curlytops rather welcomed rain on days when they had to go to school, for there was always a chance of one session, which meant that if the drops pelted down hard enough, the boys and girls would not go home to lunch, but would be let out for the day about half past one.

But when it rained on Saturday, as it did, that was not so jolly. The Curlytops and Trouble awoke on this morning of the day when there was no school, and were greeted by a pattering of rain drops on the roof and against the window panes.

"Oh, dear!" sighed Janet in her room, "it's raining, and I was going to the woods with Lola to-day to see if some of the early spring flowers had come out."

"Raining!" cried Ted, as he dressed hurriedly and went downstairs. "It's pouring, and Tom and I were going fishing! Whew, now we can't!"

"The attic is nice and dry," suggested Mrs. Martin, with a smile. "Why don't you play up there?"

"Who?" asked Janet, in a tone almost as gloomy as Ted's had been.

"Why, you three children! Why don't you play up in the attic?" went on the mother of the Curlytops. "I'm sure there are plenty of things up there to amuse you."

"But we need more than just Ted and me," pouted Janet. William didn't count, she thought to herself. Janet felt that she was growing up, and so did Ted, and they no longer cared for the simple amusements that had once satisfied them and Trouble.

"Well, telephone and see if Tom and Lola can't come over as they did when we were in the summer camp a few years ago," suggested Mrs. Martin.

"Oh, let's!" cried Janet, smiles now chasing away her frowns.

"Tell Mrs. Taylor I would let you go to her house, only I don't want William to go out in the rain," went on Mrs. Martin. "She

might think it queer that I should want Tom and Lola to come out in the wet when you two can't go. But you couldn't take William, and if you went without him—"

"I know, Mother," Janet said, with a smile. Trouble, just then, was out in the kitchen getting a piece of bread and butter from Nora. But he intended to hurry back and go up into the attic with his brother and sister.

When the matter was explained to Mrs. Taylor she readily agreed to let Tom and Lola venture out in the heavy storm.

Pretty soon they came trooping in through the downpour and Ted and his sister were very glad to see them, ushering them up into the attic where there were many things with which to have fun on a rainy Saturday.

"What'll we play?" asked Janet, willing to give the visitors the choice.

"What about having a show?" asked Tom.

"What kind of a show?" asked Ted.

"A pirate show. You and I can be pirates, Ted, and we can capture Jan and Lola and hold 'em for ransom. We can make believe those old curtain rods there

are swords," and he pointed to some brass rods in a corner.

"Sure! That'll be great!" exclaimed Ted. "But pirates always have a ship, don't they?"

"Sure!" agreed Tom. "That can be the ship," he added, pointing to an old cot in one corner. "We can put this box on one end for a cabin, and stick this long curtain pole up for a mast, and here's an old sheet that will do for a sail."

"Great!" cried Ted.

Trouble, who had been listening to this talk, now stepped forward and said very firmly:

"I'm going to be a pirate!"

"No, you can't!" decided his brother. "Two pirates are enough."

"You be the cabin boy on the ship, and you must help save us captives, Trouble," suggested Lola. "How will that be? Jan and I are going to be captives."

"I'm going to be a pirate captain!" declared Trouble. "You wouldn't let me be a captain, even if I did have a sword, when you had that snowball fight," he went on to his brother; "so I'm going to be a pirate captain now."

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"No, no, Trouble!" said Ted, very decidedly. "You can't be a pirate. There's room for only two pirates on this ship. You go with the girls."

"No!" and William shook his head. "I'll be a pirate or else I won't play!"

As no one seemed to be going to give in to him he waited a few moments and then sulked off by himself, while Ted and Tom proceeded to get the cot in shape to be a make-believe pirate ship.

"Poor Trouble!" whispered Lola to Janet.

"Oh, he'll get over it," his sister said. "He'll forget all about it in a minute and he'll want to be the engineer of the ship."

"How can he be the engineer when it's a sailing ship?" asked Lola.

"Oh, that won't make any difference to Trouble," chuckled Ted. "He can pretend anything he likes."

For a time the other children were so busy getting ready for the new game, which was to be a sort of amateur theatrical performance, that they paid no attention to William.

The "ship" was hauled out into the middle of the attic, the girls found some old dresses they put on to be "captive maidens,"

and Tom and Ted made sashes out of curtain cords and thrust into them brass rods for swords.

"Come on, Trouble, if you want to play with us," called Janet. "Where are you?" she asked.

"I'm here," came the voice of the small boy from a dark corner. "I want to be a pirate captain. I got my things on!"

The others looked toward the corner from which the voice came. They saw the figure of the little boy start out of a dim recess. Trouble was wrapped in what seemed to be a long, red robe.

A moment later William tripped and fell down, and while the echo of his tumble was still reverberating through the attic, there was a loud crash, a sound of breaking glass, and then it seemed as if the top of the house were caving in.

CHAPTER X

THE FLOOD

“WHAT’S the matter?” asked Janet, with a cry of alarm.

“Is it an explosion?” Lola shrieked. “Or if this is pirate shooting, I don’t want to play, even if it is only pretend!” she added shakily.

“We didn’t do it!” declared Tom.

“No pirate shooting!” ejaculated Ted. “It was Trouble!”

He pointed to the little fellow on the floor of the attic, all wrapped and tangled as he was in the long red robe.

“Trouble couldn’t have made all that noise,” Janet declared.

“I—I fell down!” whimpered William, hardly knowing whether to cry or not. “I fell down, I did! I was going to be a pirate captain and I fell down!”

“Poor little boy!” murmured Lola, going over toward him.

“I should think you would fall down, all

tangled up that way!" said Janet, reaching her small brother and starting to get the robe off him.

"Don't!" he protested. "This is my pirate robe, and I want to wear it."

"But what made the noise?" asked Lola. "If that was Trouble hitting the floor, he must be badly hurt."

"He doesn't seem to be," said Tom.

By this time Janet had hold of one edge of the robe, and, in spite of Trouble's protests, she pulled on it. As she did so, there was another noise, a series of bumps, though not so loud as before.

"Look out!" yelled Tom. "The whole attic is going to fall in."

"Oh! Oh!" screamed Lola.

But Ted, jumping over the prostrate William, peered into the dark corner of the attic where the small boy had found his red robe. Then Ted exclaimed:

"It's all right! Just an old bookcase Trouble pulled over. That's what made the crash, and it was the books falling out just now that made more bumps. It's all right!"

When the Curlytops and their friends were over the excitement caused by their scare, it was seen that this falling bookcase

had indeed made all the racket. It was a bookcase that had been moved up to the attic from downstairs when a new one had been put in place. Also a lot of old books, that no one cared to read, or read but seldom, had been put on the shelves of the old case and thus stored away. Hanging from the front of the book shelves was a long, red curtain, and William, seeing this, had decided it would be just what he wanted for his pirate robe.

But instead of unfastening it from the bookcase, the little fellow just wrapped it around him and started out into the open attic to show the others. As he walked along he pulled on the curtain. The bookcase, which was not set down very firmly, was pulled over. It fell with a great crash just behind Trouble, but, luckily, not hitting him. Only, he tripped on the curtain and fell at the same time.

"I'm a pirate captain," announced Trouble, when the robe had been detached from the bookcase and he was wrapped up in it. "I'm a bad pirate captain!"

"I guess we'll have to let him be it," said Janet to Ted. "He'll cry and spoil everything if we don't."

Then the pirate play began, with the old cot for a ship and Lola and Janet for captive maidens, and of course Trouble was the captain and gave many funny orders. He made a queer figure, wrapped in the old red curtain for a robe, but he laughed and had so much fun that the other boys let him have his way.

Lola and Janet were very brave when they were made captives of the pirates; but it did not take much to set them into a little panic of fear, and this was when, as they were being put into the pirate "dungeon," which was a corner of the attic fenced off with old trunks, Janet pointed to a hole in the floor and whispered:

"Look!"

"What is it?" asked Lola, as Ted and Tom, as pirates under Captain Trouble, were marching away to get more captives. "What is it, Jan?"

"In that hole!" whispered Janet, still pointing. "Don't you see?"

"I see something sticking out," answered Lola, peering more closely. "It's like a little— Oh, it's moving!" she screamed. "Oh, it's a mouse—a live mouse!"

"That's what I thought!" yelled Janet. "Come on!"

With that, ignoring the bars of their dungeon, the two girls pushed aside the trunks and ran out of the corner. Trouble, who as the pirate captain had been left to guard the captives, saw the prisoners escaping, and shouted:

"Here! Come back! That isn't fair! You can't go until you're rescued, and it isn't time yet! Come back!"

"I will not!" firmly declared Lola.

"There's a mouse in the dungeon!" cried Janet. "We're not going to play!"

Ted and Tom laughed at their sisters for being afraid of a mouse, but all the laughter of the older boys and the pleadings of Trouble could not induce Janet and her chum to get back in the trunk enclosure.

"If you want us to be captives you'll have to make the dungeon in a different place," insisted Janet.

"There isn't any other place as good," declared her brother.

"Then let's play something else," suggested Lola.

This seemed the best way out of it, and as they had played pirate long enough, any-

how, it was decided that they turn the pirate craft into a Mississippi steamboat and play taking a trip to the sunny South.

"I'll be steamboat captain instead of pirate captain," Trouble decided.

"No, you be the engineer and make steam in the boiler," suggested Ted.

It was lots of fun, and the Curlytops and their playmates did not now care how much or how long it rained. When lunch time came, Nora brought trays of food up to the attic. This was a great surprise, and it made the children laugh in delight.

"But maybe we oughtn't to stay here for lunch," objected Lola, though she looked hungrily at the good things on the trays. "Mother might not like it."

"She said it was all right," Nora reported. "Mrs. Martin called up your mother on the telephone, and Mrs. Taylor said you and your brother could stay the rest of the day."

"Oh, what fun!" cried Tom.

Ted and Janet were very happy over having a picnic lunch in the attic, and Trouble at once decided that he was going to be an Indian now, and, putting on his red robe again, he went about with a sandwich in his

hand, taking bites between his grunts, which he tried to make sound as much as possible like those he imagined an Indian would give.

"My, how hard it rains!" murmured Lola late that afternoon, when it was time for her and Tom to go home.

"Yes, there'll be a flood if this keeps up," added Ted.

Mrs. Martin, when appealed to, said it was raining pretty hard for Tom and Lola to venture out in it. The storm had increased since the Taylor children came over to play with the Curlytops.

"I'd be glad to have you and Tom stay," said Mrs. Martin to Lola, "if your mother thinks it will be all right. We have plenty of room."

"It would be lovely!" cried Lola, and she and Tom waited with anxious hearts while the telephone talk was going on.

Then, to the delight of all four children, to say nothing of Trouble, who always liked company, Lola and Tom were permitted to stay all night at the Martin house. And when, soon after this, it began to rain even harder and the wind blew with great force, Mrs. Taylor was glad her two children did not have to come through it.

"It isn't like the summer when we were in camp, and the Curlytops lived just across the clearing," said Mrs. Taylor to her husband, in telling him where Tom and Lola were. "They'd have to tramp several blocks through the rain, and they'd get soaking wet."

"Yes, it's just as well they stayed," agreed her husband. "I don't know when I've seen a spring with so much rain. The river is rising, and there'll be a flood if this keeps on."

However, the Curlytops and their playmates were not worried about this. They made up new games to play until supper time, and after that they read books and looked at pictures, playing another game or two until it was time to go to bed.

"We sure will need our rubber boots to go to Sunday-school to-morrow," remarked Ted, as he and Tom went to bed that night and looked out of the window at the rain-drenched streets.

"Maybe we can't go at all," suggested his chum.

So it turned out. The storm was as bad as ever and Mrs. Taylor said it would be all right for her children to stay until the rain

ceased, even if they had to remain over night again.

That is just what happened. So Monday morning came with the Taylor children still guests of Ted and Janet.

“And it’s still raining!” cried Ted, jumping out of bed early in the morning and running to the window. “Oh, come and look!” he went on. “Come on and look, Tom! There’s a flood! There’s a lot of water in our back yard. It’s all over the garden! There must be a lot down in the cellar, too! Oh, it’s a regular flood!”

Tom got out of bed in such a hurry that he was tangled in the bed clothes and fell, but he did not hurt himself much. He joined Ted at the window and looked at the expanse of water in the Martin yard.

“Wow! A flood, sure enough!” echoed Tom. “Now we can have some fun!”

CHAPTER XI

ON THE RAFT

“WHAT’S the matter? Has anything happened?” called Janet from the room next to the boys.

“Does mother want us to come home?” inquired Lola.

“Home!” exclaimed her brother. “We can’t get home!”

“Why not?”

“There’s a big flood! You ought to see it!” cried Ted.

The two girls jumped out of bed and ran to the window of their room. What they saw caused them to squeal with as much astonishment as the boys had voiced.

“Oh, how’ll we ever get home?” asked Lola. Tom, hearing her, answered:

“Ted and I will make a raft and paddle you over.”

“Oh, that’s a great idea!” cried Ted, hurrying to dress. “I’m glad you thought of it! A raft will be great. There’s a lot of boards and planks down in the cellar.”

By this time Trouble was up, and he, too, saw the flood from the window of his room and at once began looking for his rubber boots.

"I'm going in wading!" the small boy announced.

"Oh, no, you aren't," his mother answered, with a laugh, as she came to see that the children were awake for breakfast. "You can't go to school," she remarked, and there were more yells of delight from the children at this news. "I telephoned to your mother," Mrs. Martin went on to Tom and Lola, "saying we'd keep you while this downpour lasted. I think the rain will stop pretty soon. There can't be much more water left in the clouds."

"Oh, dear!" Ted sighed.

"What's the matter?" his mother asked.

"We want the flood to stay for a while," he answered. "We're going to make a raft—Tom and I are—and paddle the girls around. We'll take Lola home that way."

"Oh, nonsense!" laughed Mrs. Martin. "There is high water only in a few low places, like our back yard."

"And cellar," added Ted.

"Yes, there is some in our cellar," ad-

mitted his mother. "But there isn't enough for you to paddle a raft to Tom's house."

By this time the boys and girls were dressed and going downstairs for breakfast. As Mrs. Martin had said, there were signs that the rain would soon stop, for already it was slackening.

"But the flood will stay for a while, won't it?" Ted asked, a bit anxiously.

"I'm afraid it will," his mother said. "It has spoiled some things in the cellar, but, luckily, your father thought the river might rise, so last night we moved most of the articles upstairs."

"Why didn't you call me to help?" asked Ted.

"I could have helped, too," added Tom.

"Oh, well, we managed it," Mrs. Martin replied. "Thank you, boys, just the same."

Earlier that morning Mrs. Martin had found out, by calling up the school principal, that there would be no session that day, on account of the storm. It would have been impossible for the smaller children, who lived in that part of Cresco near the rising river, to get through the flooded streets. And soon the signal rang out on the school

bell which told every one that no classes would be held.

The Curlytops and their playmates, who were, in a sense, marooned in the house, did not mind in the least about not having school. In fact, they were rather glad of it.

"But it will be all right to go to-morrow," decided Mrs. Martin. "For the rain will be over by then—in fact, it has almost stopped now."

The children, looking out, saw this to be the case, and as Mrs. Martin had some marketing to do she decided to go out. The streets in front of her house were not flooded. It was only in the back yard and down in the cellar that the water of the river had overflowed.

"Now, be good children while I am gone," Mrs. Martin said to the five, whom she left in charge of Nora. "Don't cut up too much."

"No, Mother, we won't!" Ted promised, and he really meant to keep his word.

"And look after William," Janet's mother begged her.

"Yes'm, I will!"

When they were left to themselves, the Curlytops and their friends went up to the

attic to play, after they had peered down the cellar and had seen the muddy water covering the floor to a depth of about a foot.

But playing boat on a cot was nothing like having a raft down in the flood water, Ted and Tom thought. They spoke about this, and the more they thought and talked of it the more they wanted to get out on something that really floated and moved.

"Don't you think you could make a raft, Ted?" asked Tom, when they had grown tired of playing in the attic. "I don't mean one to take Lola home on," continued the Taylor lad. "I mean just a small raft down cellar. Could you make that?"

"I don't see why not," Ted answered. "There's a lot of old planks and boards down there."

"Do you suppose your mother'll care?"

"Mother didn't say we weren't to make a raft in the cellar. She just said we *couldn't* make one and paddle out in the street with it. Come on, let's do it!"

The girls were busy working with some modeling clay in a distant corner of the attic when their brothers came to this decision. And without saying anything to their sisters about their plans, Ted and Tom went

down to the cellar. Nora was in another part of the house and did not see them go down the stairs, or she might have stopped them.

Tom and Ted had on their rubber boots, and when they had, somewhat gingerly, stepped off the last dry step of the stairs, they discovered that the water in the cellar did not come quite to the tops of their boots. So they could wade about in safety.

"Here's a lot of boards!" called Tom, making his way to a corner of the cellar. Ted had switched on the electric lights before coming down, so the boys could see about them perfectly.

"They'll be just what we want!" decided Ted, and, finding a hammer and some nails on his father's work bench, which was high enough to be out of the flood, Ted and his chum began fastening the boards together in crisscross fashion to form a small raft.

They did not mind splashing around in the water that covered the cellar bottom to about a foot, and they did not care that some of the flood dribbled down inside their boots. They were too eager to finish their raft to mind anything like this.

After a while enough boards had been

nailed together to make a sort of platform which Ted and Tom found, by trying, would hold them. The raft floated about the cellar in a most delightful way.

"All aboard!" called Ted, pushing the raft along by means of a pole he found.

"Aye, aye!" answered Tom. "All aboard the raft!"

At that moment the upper cellar door opened and Trouble called:

"I want a ride! I'm coming down!"

And he came down all of a sudden, for his foot slipped and he tumbled, rolling down the stairs bumpity bump!

"Oh! Ouch!" he cried.

"Quick!" shouted Ted to his chum. "Pole the raft over to the steps. Trouble is going to roll into the water!"

CHAPTER XII

TED HEARS SOME TALK

TED MARTIN made a great splashing in the water with his pole, and Tom did the same. They tried to get it close to the bottom cellar step—the last one out of water—before Trouble arrived there.

But they were too late!

Down the steps, bumpity bump, came the little fellow. But he had found an old coat up in the attic, and had put this on, wrapping it about him, so that he was so bundled up and padded that he might have fallen down two flights of stairs, instead of one, without getting hurt.

He fairly bounded his way from the top to the bottom and then he just splashed into the water, for the raft was about three feet away from the last step when Trouble reached it.

“There he goes—in!” yelled Ted.

“We have to get him out!” shouted Tom. Trouble’s big coat came unwrapped as he

fell in, or there might have been a serious outcome of the adventure. And not only did the coat come unwrapped, but it came right off Trouble, "like the skin off an orange," as he said afterward.

So he fell into the foot-deep muddy water that covered the bottom of the cellar without anything to tangle around his legs. Ted, seeing that the raft was not going to arrive in time to let Trouble fall on it, leaped off into the flood, splashing more water down inside his rubber boots. But Ted didn't mind that when he was trying to save his little brother.

While Tom held the raft steady, ready to do what he could, Ted reached down into the muddy water and caught hold of Trouble, who, as has been told you, became "unshucked," as he called it later, from the big coat that had protected him in his tumble down the stairs.

"I got him!" cried Ted, puffing a bit as he raised William up and laid him, all dripping wet, on the raft. "I—got—him!"

William was trying to breathe after having swallowed some water, and at last he caught his breath, with a sighing gasp and asked:

"Am—am I—drowned?"

"Drowned? Not a bit of it!" laughed Tom. "You're all right!"

"Oh—all—right," said Trouble.

Then Ted looked at his small brother's hands, at the same time as did Tom, and the Curlytop lad exclaimed:

"What you got there?"

Trouble was clasping something in each chubby fist. Something that was like a lump of brown mud.

"What are they?" asked Tom.

William opened his fists as he said:

"Taters!"

"What?" cried Tom, who was not as well acquainted with Trouble's style of talk as was Ted.

"Taters," answered William again, dropping the brown, mud-colored objects on the raft, where he sat with water dribbling from every opening in his clothes.

"He means potatoes," chuckled Ted, leaning over to examine the things his brother had brought up with him from his dive to the bottom of the cellar.

"'At's what I said," mumbled William, wiping the water from his face and leaving it streaked with mud. "Taters!"

"That's what they are!" cried Tom, with a laugh. "He grabbed them when he went down."

Trouble had done just this. The potatoes had been washed out of their corner bin by the high water, and were scattered about the cellar. Hardly knowing what he was doing when he fell off the last step into the flood, the little boy had grabbed the first thing his hands touched. And they had turned out to be two large potatoes.

"We can make a fire and roast 'em!" William said, with a laugh. He had often been with Ted and Tom when they made bonfires to roast potatoes in the ashes. "We'll eat 'em!" went on the small boy.

"I guess we can't make any fire on this raft," Ted remarked, though he would have liked nothing better. "And you have to go upstairs and put on dry clothes, Trouble."

"No!" objected the small brother. "I'm all right. I'm not cold!"

"You must get on dry clothes!" insisted Ted.

"I'll help you carry him up," offered Tom.

Trouble began to stiffen himself, and it looked as if he might live up to his name,

when Nora called from the upper cellar door:

"Is anybody down cellar? Where's William? I can't find him, and I heard a noise—"

"Trouble's here with me," explained Ted. "He fell downstairs—"

"In the water!" added the small boy himself.

"Oh, mercy me!" gasped Nora, hurrying down the stairs. "Whatever are you doing?" she asked, when she saw the three boys on the raft.

"We're playing steamboat," was William's answer.

"It's all right," Ted hastened to add. "Nobody's hurt and mother didn't say we couldn't make a raft in the cellar. It's all right."

"I got some potatoes for you, Nora," put in William. "You can cook 'em on your stove 'cause we can't make a fire on the raft. The water would put it out. Go on, give me a ride!" he begged his brother and Tom.

"I must put dry clothes on him!" declared the maid. "Oh, whatever will your mother say?" she gasped.

At the thought of his mother, Trouble

made no further objection to being taken upstairs, there to have his wet garments changed for dry ones.

"You'd better come along, too," Nora said to Ted and his chum.

But Ted felt that he was fast growing up, and he did not think he must obey Nora, especially when he was not wet, that is, if one did not count his feet, for considerable water had splashed into his boots.

"We'll be up pretty soon, Nora," Ted promised. "We didn't fall into the water."

"All right," Nora agreed, for she realized that the Curlytops were growing too old to be "bossed" as she could order Trouble about when Mrs. Martin was not at home.

So Ted and Tom continued to paddle about the flooded cellar a little longer. Meanwhile, Trouble was dressed in clean, dry clothes, and then Janet and Lola came down out of the attic, being tired of modeling, though Janet had a really lovely little figure to show her mother when she should return.

"Where's Ted?" Janet asked Nora, out in the kitchen.

"Down in the cellar on a raft!" answered

the voice of her brother, while Tom called out:

“Come on down and have a ride!”

The girls were much surprised when they heard what had happened to Trouble, though the little fellow seemed to think it was all right, since he had brought up two potatoes.

But Janet and Lola refused to trust themselves on the raft, and it was probably just as well they did not get on board, for it was so small and light that it is doubtful if it would have held them and the boys.

So after Ted and Tom had paddled about a bit longer, they came up to join the girls, deciding that it was not much fun playing in the damp cellar all by themselves.

Mrs. Martin came back from the market, to announce that the flood was rapidly going down, since the heavy rain had stopped. She was much surprised to learn what had happened, and said she wished the boys had not built a raft in the cellar, though she had not forbidden them to do this.

“I thought you meant it wouldn’t be possible to make a raft to paddle in the streets,” Ted stated. “I didn’t think you’d care about a raft in the cellar.”

“Well, it turned out all right, as it happened,” said his mother.

As Mrs. Martin had said, the storm had ceased and the high water was quickly going down, and by afternoon Tom and Lola could go to their own home, which they were glad to do in spite of the fact that they had had a lot of fun in the home of the Curlytops.

The next day nearly all traces of the flood had vanished, except for streaks of mud here and there and in little piles of driftwood left on the banks of the river when the high waters went down. Ted, Janet and Trouble went to school, as did Tom and his sister, and later on Trouble’s teacher, who had him in her kindergarten class, told Miss Becker, who was a friend of hers, that William insisted on telling all the other boys and girls how he had fallen downstairs, into the water and how he had grabbed up two potatoes, or “taters,” as he called them.

A week passed, during which the weather grew much warmer, and there was a feeling in the air that spring had arrived to stay and that summer was not far away.

All the snow was now melted and, more than once, Ted and his sister, passing the

place where the big drift had been, looked around under bushes and in holes and hollows for a sight of Mrs. Bailey's valuable old cook-book.

"But what good would it be if we did find it?" Janet asked Ted more than once, after they had looked in vain. "She couldn't read the ink writing after it's been all wet, as it must be with all the rain."

"Maybe she could read some of the recipes," suggested Ted hopefully.

Now, it so happened that, one day, coming home from school rather late, for he had stayed in as a volunteer to help Miss Becker clean off the blackboards, as Ted was walking past the place where he and Janet had lost the cook-book, he saw two boys walking along just ahead of him. One was Peter Mordant and the other was Kent Ford, a lad about Peter's age. Both lads were several years older than was Teddy Martin.

"I thought Peter Mordant moved away to Lakeville," said Ted to himself. "I wonder what he's doing back in Cresco? Maybe he's looking for another job," he reflected, as he remembered what Mrs. Bailey had told Janet about Peter's having lost his position.

Both the boys in front of Ted were talking

so earnestly that they did not see or hear the Curlytop lad coming along behind them, and when Ted was near them he overheard Peter saying:

"I have it hid in a good, safe place. Nobody will ever find it. I'll get square with Joe Bailey for what he did to me!"

"What did he do?" asked Kent.

"He made me lose my job! That's what he did. But I'll get even with him! I've got this well hidden. Nobody can ever find it!"

"Whew!" whistled Ted softly to himself. "Peter must have taken something that belongs to Joe. I wonder if I'd better tell him?"

Just then Peter turned suddenly and caught sight of Ted. The older lad scowled and exclaimed:

"What do you want? Are you following me? Are you trying to hear what I said?" He made a move as though he would strike Ted.

CHAPTER XIII

A QUEER PET

TED MARTIN was a brave chap, and he was not greatly afraid when Peter Mordant turned on him with such a scowling face. Ted stood his ground.

"Did you hear what I said?" snapped Peter. "Are you following me?"

"No, I am not!" boldly answered Ted. "I have as good a right to walk along the street as you have. Maybe I have a better right."

"A better right! What do you mean?" asked the older lad.

"You don't live here any more," went on Ted. "And I do. I belong in Cresco, and you moved away to Lakeville. So I have more right on the street here than you have."

"He's got you there, Pete!" exclaimed Kent Ford, with a laugh. He was not a bad sort of chap, though older and rougher than the Curlytop lad.

"Well, he's got no right to be following me on the street!" Peter mumbled. "Maybe he's got a right to walk on the street, same as I have. But I got just as good a right as I ever had, even if we did move away. But he can't be following me and listening to what I say."

"I wasn't following you. I always come home from school this way," Teddy declared. "And I wasn't listening to what you said."

This was true enough. Ted had overheard some of the talk, but that was because Peter spoke so loudly. And overhearing talk accidentally is quite different from purposely listening to it.

"Well, if you weren't following me and weren't listening, it's all right," said Peter, with a growling voice. "You'd better not, either. Now, get along!"

Ted did not like being ordered this way, but he thought it best to say nothing, and so he hurried on, while Kent said:

"Don't let him worry you, Ted. He's got a grouch on to-day."

Truly, Peter did not seem to be in a pleasant mood, for he scowled as Ted passed. But the Curlytop lad did not mind this. He

was too busy thinking about what he had heard Peter say.

"I think I ought to tell Joe Bailey," mused Ted, as he walked on. "Maybe he's lost something and Peter found it and won't give it back. Yes, I'll tell Joe. I'll walk past his house now, and if I see him I'll tell him."

But though Ted walked slowly past the widow's house, he saw no sign of her son, and when he stopped to think of it, he realized that he wouldn't be very likely to at this time of day. For Joe worked and it was too early for him to be home. Yes, and now he remembered that Janet had told him that Joe had gone to Lakeville to work.

"Well, I'll tell him the first time I see him," Ted decided. "He'll be coming home to see his mother."

He was still thinking about his encounter with the two older boys and was wondering what it was that Peter had hidden when he reached home.

Ted had it in mind to tell his mother what he had heard, and to ask her advice, but as soon as he opened the door Janet came rushing to meet her brother, calling out:

"Oh, you'll never guess, Ted! Never!"

"What's the matter?" asked Ted. "Has Trouble been doing something queer?"

"Oh, no, nothing like that!"

"What, then?"

"We're going on an auto ride Saturday. It will be the first ride of the spring. Daddy is going to take us all for a ride! Won't that be fun?"

"Sure!" Ted agreed. "But where's he going? I made it up to go fishing with Tom Taylor, but—"

"This will be more fun than fishing," declared Janet, dancing around her brother and humming a little song. "You never catch any fish, anyhow!"

"We would this time!" declared Ted. "The fish are beginning to bite, now that the weather is getting warmer. But I'll go on the auto ride. Where are we going?"

"We're going to get a pet," put in Trouble, who had been listening to the talk of his brother and sister.

"A pet?" exclaimed Ted. "You mean a dog or a cat or a pony—one of Animal Joe's pets?"

"It isn't for us," Janet said. "I guess we've had enough pets, and we have a cat now." This was true enough. At different

times the Curlytops had had a dog named Skyrocket and a cat named Turnover, because she would roll over when told. But, like all pets, they had disappeared, and now a new cat had taken the place of Turnover, though there was no dog in place of Skyrocket. Another time Ted and Janet had had ponies to ride. And once they had owned a goat.

But though Mrs. Martin liked animals and was willing to let her children have pets, she was, in a way, glad when they began to grow up and did not care so much for dogs, cats and other creatures. Though there was now in the Martin house a stray cat that seemed to be very much at home.

"If it isn't for us, what's the use of getting a pet?" Ted wanted to know.

"It's for Mr. Layton who lives on Maple Street," explained Janet.

"What's he want of a pet?" inquired Ted.

"It isn't exactly for him—it's for his little boy."

"But why should we go to get a pet for Mr. Layton's little boy?" asked Teddy, with a puzzled look on his face.

"Oh, dear!" sighed Janet, as though she had many worries on her mind. "I've got

to tell you the whole story, I suppose."

"You have if you want me to know about it," chuckled her brother.

"Well, it's like this," and Janet sat down on a stool, while Ted put away his school books. "A little while ago daddy came home from the store to get some papers he'd forgotten. I had just come home from school. Daddy asked mother and Trouble and me if we'd like to go for an auto ride on Saturday. Of course, we said we would, and daddy said he'd take us out toward Lakeville."

"That's where Peter Mordant lives," remarked Teddy.

"Oh, yes! And Jess Mordant, too. That's where they moved to," said Janet. "But we aren't going to see them. I don't like Jess Mordant. She was too stuck up while she was here."

Ted thought he could say something about Peter, but he did not, for Janet went on:

"Well, daddy said he'd take us to Lakeville and maybe farther. He's got to stop and see a man there on business. And he said when he told this to Mr. Layton, who came into daddy's store this morning, Mr. Layton asked if daddy would stop at his

brother's farm and bring home a pet for little Jimmie Layton."

"But daddy hasn't a brother with a farm in Lakeville," objected Teddy. "So how can he stop there and get a pet, and—"

"Oh, it isn't daddy's brother that has the farm!" exclaimed Janet, with a laugh. "It's Mr. Layton. Listen! This is how it is. There are two Mr. Laytons. One lives here on Maple Street. The other lives out near Lakeville and he has a farm and pets. Not as many pets as Animal Joe, I guess, but he has some. So the Mr. Layton that lives on Maple Street here in Cresco," went on Janet, explaining matters very fully, "when he heard daddy was going to Lakeville—this Mr. Layton asked daddy to go to the other Mr. Layton and bring back a pet that's been waiting at the farm for some time. I guess the country Mr. Layton doesn't come to the city very often."

"Oh, now I see what you mean!" chuckled Ted. "Well, I wish we were going to have a pet."

"I'd like an alligator," declared Trouble.

"Oh, a nasty alligator!" cried Janet.

"Alligators aren't nasty!" said her small brother. "They got nice long tails, and I

could tie my little train of cars to the alligator's tail and he'd pull 'em."

Saturday morning came at last, a bright, beautiful day, quite warm and mild for spring. The roads were in good shape and Mr. Martin, having arranged his business matters, planned for a fine time in the country with his family.

At the last minute Mrs. Martin wanted some packages of cookies for lunch, and sent Janet to the store for them. On the way back Janet passed the home of Mrs. Bailey, and the widow, standing in her doorway, saw the bundle under Janet's arm and, hailing her, asked:

"Did you find my cook-book, and are you bringing it back?"

"No'm, I'm sorry to say I didn't find it," Janet answered. "I wish I could."

"I wish you could too, child! I never missed anything so much as I do that book. I can't remember a hundredth part—no, not a five hundredth part of the recipes in it. There was one for a steamed pudding—a special kind of pudding with apricots in. If I could only remember that and about forty other recipes—"

"Oh, she's beginning on those horrid frac-

tions again!" thought Janet, with a sigh.

She wondered how long the widow would keep her there, talking about the lost cook-book, when Janet knew they were all waiting for her at home. But luckily a neighbor hurried over to talk to Mrs. Bailey, and in speaking to this woman the owner of the lost cook-book forgot about Janet.

The Curlytop girl hurried on, glad to get away, though of course she was sorry about losing the important old cook-book.

"Mrs. Bailey will never forget it," thought Janet.

In a little while the auto party was on the way to Lakeville, bowling along pleasant roads, the children breathing in deep of the mild air of spring. They had had a great deal of fun in the winter that had just ended, but they counted on having more pleasures in the coming summer.

"I hope it's an alligator," remarked Trouble, as he sat between Janet and Ted on the rear seat, Mrs. Martin being in front with her husband.

"What do you hope is an alligator?" asked Ted.

"That pet daddy is going to get for Jimmie Layton," answered the small boy.

"Maybe it will be two alligators, and then I can have one of 'em!"

"Oh, what a funny wish!" exclaimed Janet.

As Mr. Martin did not know how long his business would take in Lakeville he decided he would first stop at the Layton farm and get the pet as he had promised to do. Then he could go on, attend to his own affairs, and his wife and the children could enjoy their excursion.

"Oh, so you're from my brother in Cresco, are you?" asked the farmer, when Mr. Martin stopped the auto in front of a pleasant, rambling old house. "You've come for Jimmie's pet? Well, I'll have it ready for you in a minute. I'll put it in a crate so it won't get away."

"Is it a alligator?" Trouble called after Mr. Layton, as the farmer walked back toward the barns and other outbuildings.

"Is what an alligator?"

"The pet we're going to take to Jimmie Layton," replied Trouble.

"An alligator? Gracious goodness, no!" exclaimed Mr. Layton, with a laugh. "Where would I get a pet alligator?"

"Trouble has done nothing but talk alli-

gator ever since he heard we were coming out here," explained Mrs. Martin. "He has an idea he can train an alligator to pull a toy train of cars by its tail."

"Hum! Well, I'm sorry I have no alligators," said Mr. Layton, with another laugh. "But I have a pet for my brother's boy, all right. I hope he will like it. I'll be back in a little while."

"I wonder what sort of a pet it can be!" exclaimed Ted.

"It's queer he didn't say," added Janet.

A little later Mr. Layton came around the corner of the house, carrying a small, slatted box. From the box came shrill squeals, while from one end stuck out a pink nose and from the other a little, twisted tail.

"What sort of a pet can it be?" asked the puzzled Janet of her brother.

"I don't know!" he answered.

CHAPTER XIV

A MERRY CHASE

WHEN Mr. Layton, carrying the slatted crate, came nearer to the auto in which the wondering Curlytops, their parents and Trouble sat, the sounds from the queer pet became louder. My, how it squealed!

"And look at the funny nose!" laughed Trouble.

"What a cute, curly tail!" exclaimed Janet.

By this time the farmer had brought his nephew's pet close enough for the children to see what it was, and Teddy cried out:

"It's a little pig!"

"Oh, isn't he cute!" exclaimed Janet.

Indeed, the closer view they had of the little animal in the crate the cuter and nicer it seemed. For it was not dirty, like some pigs you may have seen. The skin of this one was clean and pink. It had been washed and scrubbed.

"What makes him squeal so?" asked Janet, for it seemed, from the noise made,

that there might be half a dozen little pigs in the crate instead of only one.

"He's a bit afraid, I guess," Mr. Layton answered. "You see, he's been running around loose, for I didn't know just when my brother would send for him. And when I caught him and put him in a crate I guess I scared him a little. But he'll soon get over squealing."

"I hope so," remarked Mrs. Martin, with a smile. "It will be rather odd to be driving around Lakeville with a squealing pig in the car."

"Folks will think it's our brakes squeaking!" chuckled Ted.

"That's right! It is just like squeaking brakes," agreed Janet.

"Oh, he'll stop yelling and settle down as soon as you've started," said Mr. Layton. "Maybe he's hungry. Here's his bottle."

The farmer took from his pocket a baby's nursing bottle with a rubber nipple on one end. In the bottle was some warm milk, and when the bottle had been thrust into the top of the crate, through a hole made for it, so the nipple stuck inside for the baby pig to reach, he began sucking out the milk and at once his squeals stopped.

"That was it—he was hungry," said the farmer.

"And every time he squeals are we supposed to give him a bottle of warm milk?" asked Mr. Martin, with a laugh.

"Oh, what he has there will last until you get him to my brother's place," Mr. Layton said. "After that they'll feed him."

"Does your brother know you're sending Jimmie a pet pig?" asked Mrs. Martin.

"Well, I don't know that he does," was the answer as the crate containing the now quiet pig was put in the rear of the auto, at the feet of the Curlytops. "But George asked me to send his boy a pet, and this is the only kind I have now, unless I sent a pet calf or a pet pony."

"I think," said Mr. Martin, with a smile, "that we'd rather have a little pig in a crate in our car than a pony or a calf."

He then drove on, while the Curlytops and Trouble looked at the cute little pig that sucked away at the warm milk as eagerly as if it had never before eaten in all its young life.

"I hope the milk lasts until we get him home," said Mrs. Martin, in a low voice to her husband. "It would be dreadful to have

him start squealing in the middle of Lakeville."

"It would be sort of funny," admitted her husband.

Mr. Martin attended to his business, and then the car was driven out into the country toward a patch of woods where it was intended to have lunch.

It was the first picnic of the summer season, now at hand, and Ted, Janet and Trouble enjoyed every moment of it. They ran about in the woods, found the places where a few early wild flowers grew, and then sat down to a lunch their mother spread for them on a broad, flat stump.

"Maybe we ought to give the piggie some of this," said Trouble, holding up a piece of cake, half eaten.

"Oh, let's!" cried Janet.

"No!" interposed her mother. "Let the pig alone. He's better off asleep. And he's quieter," she added, with a smile.

Now and then Trouble, who seemed much taken with the new pet that was to go to Jimmie Layton, would go on tiptoe to the auto, look in and come back to whisper to his mother:

"He's asleep yet!"

"Is there any milk left in the bottle?" Mrs. Martin asked.

"Oh, yes, there's a lot left," Trouble answered.

"Then there won't be any squeals right away," said Mrs. Martin.

Ted and Janet played a game of tag, and after that a game of hide and go seek, and as Trouble wanted to take part in this they let him.

"I'm going to hide where you'll never find me," the small boy said when it was Janet's turn to cover her eyes and count slowly to a hundred by fives. "You won't find me."

"All right—run along and hide," suggested his sister, counting on: "Forty-five fifty, fifty-five sixty."

Ted thought he had picked a good hiding place. It was under a shelving rock in front of which grew some bushes.

"Jan will never see me in there," said the Curlytop lad to himself. "And it's so near, home I can run in free as soon as Jan goes a little way off to look for me."

So Trouble tramped off by himself to the hiding place he had picked out, while Ted squeezed himself beneath the rock and back of the screening bushes.

Janet counted up to one hundred and then, with her eyes still blinded so she would not see in which direction her brothers had gone, she called:

“Ready or not, I’m coming!”

She waited a moment, and, hearing no protests, started out to look for the hidden ones. Carefully Janet stepped away from the “home” tree, looking this way and that. If she could spy either of her brothers she would call out his name, run back and touch the tree and the first one spied would be “it” the next time.

Ted might have remained hidden under his ledge until Janet got far enough away from home for him to run in free, but for what happened. And this was that one of the slender branches of the bush in front of a rock touched Ted on his nose, tickling him.

“Oh, I’m going to sneeze!” he thought. He tried desperately to hold it back, but he could not, and he gave such a loud “aker-choo!” that he shook the bush as if a strong wind had blown it. This at once attracted Janet’s attention and, looking in that direction, she called:

“I spy Teddy! I spy Teddy!”

She ran back to the tree to touch it, and her brother leaped from his hiding place to beat her. But he did not have a chance and he was made "it."

"But you wouldn't have caught me if I hadn't sneezed," he said.

"Maybe not," agreed Janet, with a laugh. "Now, I've got to find Trouble."

"Oh, call 'in free,' and don't bother to look for him," suggested Ted.

"Oh, no," objected Janet. "He likes to be hunted for. I'll look, but I'll pretend not to see him if I do, so he can get in free."

"All right," agreed Teddy.

So Janet began her search. Trouble had a good hiding place, though, and for some little time Janet looked in vain for him. But at last in a quiet part of the woods she heard a little scraping noise and, looking whence it came, she saw a hollow log lying on the ground. Inside the log she caught sight of a shoe and then she knew Trouble was hidden in there.

"Though how he managed to-crawl in I don't see," said Janet to herself.

She decided she would pretend not to see her small brother, to give him a chance to crawl out and get in free. This, she knew,

would greatly please him. So Janet walked on, saying:

"I wonder where he is hiding? He has a good place. I don't believe I can ever find him. But I'll go over there and look."

This talk was made loud on purpose, so that William might hear it. And he did. Laughing to himself, he started to back out of the log into which he had crawled, saying:

"I fooled Janet. She couldn't find me! Now, I'll get in free!"

But though Trouble had easily crawled into the log, it was not so easy to crawl out, and presently he found that he was stuck. This frightened him a little and he began to call:

"Oh, Janet! Oh, Teddy! I can't get out!"

Janet, who had not gone very far off and who was waiting until her small brother could get home free, now heard his cry of distress and went running toward him. At the same time, Teddy, who had been roaming idly about the woods, heard William call.

"What's the matter?" Ted asked.

"Trouble's stuck in a log—look!" and Janet pointed.

By this time William had wiggled and backed out of the hollow tree trunk so that his two feet stuck forth. But this was as far as he could get of his own accord.

"Ted! Jan!" he called. "Get me out!"

Impulsively Teddy leaped forward to grab hold of his small brother's legs, but Janet exclaimed:

"Careful! You might hurt him!"

"We'll have to pull him out!" insisted Ted. "He got in and he can get out. It's just his clothes that hold him, I guess. You get hold of one leg and I'll get hold of the other. Then we'll both pull together."

"Oh, maybe we'll hurt him!" protested Janet.

"No, we'll not!" Ted insisted. "Come on—pull!"

By this time Trouble was a little more frightened than at first, and he began to cry, but Ted called to him:

"Don't be afraid. We'll soon have you out!"

"Maybe I'd better call daddy and mother, Ted," suggested Janet.

"No, we'll get him out," Teddy assured her.

They did. Each of the Curlytops, taking hold of one of Trouble's ankles, began to pull him out of the hollow tree. At first it seemed as if the small boy would remain stuck. But at last his coat, which had caught on some knot or projection inside the log, slipped off and it was easy to pull him out, feet first.

"Better not try anything like that again, William," warned Janet, when the little fellow stood up, his face dirty from the rotten wood of the log.

"Maybe I won't," he promised. "But you wouldn't 'a' found me if I hadn't got stuck, would you, Jan?"

"Maybe not," she answered.

Ted went to the other end of the log to examine it.

"It would have been easier for him to crawl out this end," said the Curlytop boy. "It's bigger here. Why didn't you crawl all the way through, Trouble?"

"Oh, I thought maybe there was a bear away up inside," was the answer.

Just then Mrs. Martin called the children to come and get ready to go back home. The

first spring picnic was over, and though the Curlytops were sorry, they knew there were more good times ahead of them.

"Is the little pig asleep yet?" asked Trouble, when he got back to the auto, and after Ted and Janet had told their parents of his adventure in the hollow log.

"No, he's drinking the rest of the milk," Janet reported, after she had peered in at the queer pet.

"I hope there's enough to last until we leave him where he belongs," said Mrs. Martin. "Let's hurry before he begins squealing again."

"Folks will think it's only our brakes," said Teddy again. But his mother was not convinced.

However, the little pig seemed quiet enough when they were all in the car once more and Mr. Martin turned around to head back through Lakeville for Cresco. The little pig was sucking away at the bottle of milk and seemed contented.

"I wonder if we'll see any of the Mor-dants?" Janet said to her brother, when they were just entering Lakeville.

"I saw Peter over in Cresco the other

day," Ted stated, remembering his encounter with the unpleasant lad.

"What was he doing there?" Janet asked.

Before her brother could answer, Trouble gave a start, looked down in the bottom of the car, and cried:

"He's out!"

"Who?" asked Ted.

"The little pig! He's out of the crate!"

"Sure enough, he is!" echoed Janet.

Ted was just reaching down to grab the pet pig and put it back in the crate, from which the little animal had pushed a slat or two with his strong nose, when the car unexpectedly went over a bump. One of the side doors swung open, and at that moment, the pig, with a grunt, leaped up and out, landing in the street, down which he began to run, squealing at the top of his voice.

"There he goes! We'll have to get him!" yelled Ted, and in another moment he was in a merry chase after the escaped pet.

CHAPTER XV

JACK'S BOAST

"WART for me! I'll help you!" yelled Janet, getting ready to follow Ted in the chase after the pig.

Mr. Martin had thrown out the clutch and put on the brakes soon after going over the bump and hearing the talk of the children about the escaped pet. So Ted was not in much danger leaping from the still moving car which was slowly rolling along. By the time Janet was ready to follow, her father had steered the machine over to the curb and it was still.

"What is the matter?" asked Mrs. Martin, turning about.

"The little pig's out!" yelled Trouble.

"There he goes—down the street!" added Janet.

"Catch him, Ted! Catch him!" cried Trouble.

By this time the mother of the Curlytops had seen her older son racing down the

Lakeville street, while ahead of him, speeding as fast as it could go and squealing at the top of its voice, was the little pink pig. For he was beautifully clean and pink, as all pet pigs should be.

"Hold on, Ted!" his father called. "Let that pig go! You can't catch it!"

"Yes, I will!" was the answer. "I'll get him!"

"And I'll help!" added Janet, who was by this time out on the sidewalk.

By this time a crowd had gathered, hearing the squeals of the little pig, and while men and women looked on, laughing, several boys joined in the chase after Ted and Janet.

"Dear me, this is dreadful!" murmured Mrs. Martin, as several persons began looking toward her and her husband.

"They won't know the pig got out of our car if you don't tell them, my dear," said Mr. Martin, with a laugh.

"They'll know if Ted brings it back here."

"Maybe he won't catch the little beast," chuckled Mr. Martin. But from the speed of his son he thought it very likely that Teddy would be successful. "Pigs dodge

about worse than a football player trying to make a touchdown," he added.

But if Mrs. Martin thought people in the street would not know that the pig had escaped from her car, she was soon disappointed. For Trouble, standing up on the seat between his father and mother to get a better look down the street at Ted racing after the pig, suddenly exclaimed:

"I hope he gets our pig!"

"Is that your pet pig, little boy?" asked a smiling man near the car.

"We're taking him home to another boy," William explained. "But he got away—I mean the pig did," he added.

"Yes, I see he did," chuckled the man. "Well, I hope you get the little squealer back."

Mrs. Martin felt like saying she hoped he would run so far that Ted could never catch him, but she did not think it would be wise.

Meanwhile the pig, squealing louder than ever, was racing down the street, in and out among the legs of men, women and children. Men, who thus suddenly saw the little fellow, gave a shout and leaped to one side. Women screamed and looked for shelter. Children joined in the chase, so that soon a

dozen boys and girls were strung out behind Ted and Janet, racing after the pig.

The little pink pig reached a side street, and as here a number of autos were passing, the creature turned and ran back up the street down which it had been speeding. This the little pig did so suddenly that he almost upset Ted, who was close behind him.

"He ran right between my legs!" Ted cried to Janet.

"And mine, too," she added, for she had made an unsuccessful grab for the pet as it turned.

"There he goes, into that store!" a boy yelled, and Ted had a glimpse of the pink body shooting in through an open door.

"Now we'll get him!" Janet's brother called to her. "Come on!"

Into the store they ran, much to the surprise of the man who kept it. He was an Italian selling fruits and peanuts. He had seen the pig rush in, and was hardly able to believe his eyes. And then came the rush of Ted and Janet, followed by other boys and girls.

"Whatta da mat'?" cried the Italian.

"It's our pig!" exclaimed Ted pantingly, and then, seeing the little animal under a

low counter, the Curlytop lad made a dive for it and managed to get hold of the pig by one leg.

"Out you come!" cried Ted, pulling as he had pulled Trouble from the hollow log. And the pig came, for it was no match for Teddy.

But if it had squealed before, when hungry and when running, it squealed twice as loud now.

"Oh, I'm not going to hurt you!" Teddy said, struggling to hold the squirming animal. "Keep still!" But the pig only squealed the louder, and at last Janet said:

"Hold your hand over his mouth. Hold his jaws shut and then he can't yell!"

"Good idea!" exclaimed Ted, and he tried this, which muffled some of the pig's noise, but not all of it.

So it was at the head of a laughing procession of men, boys, women and girls that Ted and Janet went back to the auto with the captured pig, Ted holding it in his arms, and with one hand over the snout to muffle the squeals.

"I never was more embarrassed in my life," said Mrs. Martin, telling of the matter afterward to Mrs. Taylor. "It was dread-

ful! But Mr. Martin just sat there and laughed and laughed!"

"Indeed, the father of the Curlytops did not seem to mind all the attention centered on him and his family.

"Well, I got him!" panted Ted, coming up to the car with the pig.

"Put him back in the crate and keep your feet on the loose slats so he can't get out again," Ted's father advised him and Janet. "Then we'll scoot along out of here. I guess your mother doesn't like it."

"Like it! I should say I don't!" declared Mrs. Martin, holding fast to Trouble, who was squirming around to get a better view of Ted and Janet slipping the pig back into the crate. "If ever again I take home a pig for a pet you'll know it!"

Ted had to take his hand off the pig's mouth to slip the little fellow back into the crate, and the squealing started up again louder than ever. But Mr. Martin started the car and was soon out of the neighborhood, much to his wife's relief, though they left behind a jolly, laughing crowd. Not often was there a pig chase in Lakeville.

But though they were soon far enough away from the place where the pig had got-

ten out and where the crowd had gathered, they could not get away from the pig's squeals. The faster the car went the louder the pig squealed, until at last Mrs. Martin put her hands over her ears and exclaimed:

"Mercy! Will nothing quiet that creature?"

"I think he's hungry!" announced Ted, looking down at the crate on top of which he and Janet had their feet to hold the loose slats.

"He's nosing around that bottle," reported Janet, taking a closer observation. "But he can't get anything out of it, because there's no milk in it."

"Oh, let's find a cow and give the little pig some milk!" proposed Trouble. "Poor, little hungry pig!"

"We've got to do something!" exclaimed Mrs. Martin. "Those squeals are terrible! We must fill that pig's bottle!"

"But where can we get any milk here?" asked Mr. Martin, for they were then driving through a residential section of the city.

"There's a delicatessen store on that corner," and Ted pointed toward it as they approached. "They sell milk."

"Then for mercy's sake get that pig's

bottle filled!" exclaimed his mother. "Everybody is looking at us wondering where the squeals are coming from."

"Yes, I guess we are attracting a bit of attention," admitted Mr. Martin. "We'll stop at that store."

"You hold your feet on the loose slats and I'll take the bottle out," Ted directed his sister, and as Janet did this, and while the pig still kept up his squealing, the Curlytop lad took out the milk-flask and hurried with it into the store.

"Ach! Your baby is hungry, yes?" asked the hearty German woman behind the counter when she saw the bottle. "Warm milk I should put in der pottle—yes?"

"If you please," answered Teddy. "But it isn't for a regular baby. It's for a little pig."

"Ach! A pig, yes? Then sour milk is besser. Some of dot I will gif you. Pigs I kept in der old country, and sour milk much dey like besser as sweet."

"That's so," agreed Ted, remembering that on his grandfather's farm the pigs had squealed with delight when they smelled the sour milk.

The kindly German delicatessen woman

soon had the bottle filled, and Ted hurried with it to the car. When it had been thrust into the crate, with the nipple down so the little pig could draw on it, all the squeals ceased.

"Such a relief," sighed Mrs. Martin. "Now let's hurry home before he uses all that milk up and yells for more."

Mr. Martin was about to drive on when Trouble decided he wanted some cookies, and as there were some in the store window, Mrs. Martin directed Ted to buy some.

"And get some for me," begged Janet.

"I'll get enough for all of us and some for the pig!" said Ted, with a laugh.

"Better get some extra milk in a larger bottle," suggested Mr. Martin, and this Ted did.

He was coming out of the store with the bag of cookies and the extra milk when he almost ran into a boy who was walking along the street.

"Oh, excuse me!" exclaimed Ted.

"All right," said the other lad, and he was about to pass on when he suddenly exclaimed: "Why, it's Ted Martin."

"Hello, Jack Mordant!" answered the Curlytop lad. He recognized the brother of

Peter Mordant. Jack and Ted were fairly good friends at times, even though they were not intimate.

"What are you doing here?" asked Ted.

"Why, we live here now. We moved from Cresco."

"Oh, that's so! I almost forgot. Do you like it here?"

"Pretty good," Jack replied. "How's everything in Cresco?"

"Oh, just about the same."

"The widow Bailey didn't find her cook-book, did she?" suddenly asked Jack.

"No," Ted answered. "What do you know about it?"

"I know a lot about it!" chuckled Jack. "She'll never see it again! That's what I know. Mrs. Bailey will never see her cook-book again!" He laughed at this boast and was about to pass on when Ted caught hold of him.

CHAPTER XVI

TRACING THE COOK-BOOK

“HEY, what’s the idea?” asked Jack Mordant in some surprise, as he felt himself being held by Ted. “What’s the big idea?” Jack was a bit given to slang, which was one reason why Mrs. Martin, when the Mordants lived in Cresco, did not want Ted to play too much with this lad. “Let go of me!” went on Jack. “I don’t want to wrestle this morning!”

“I’m not wrestling,” said Ted, and his face was serious.

“Then what you holding me for?”

“I want you to tell me more about that cook-book,” explained Ted, holding the bag of cookies in one hand and with the other keeping a grip on Jack’s coat.

“What cook-book?”

“The one you just spoke about. Mrs. Bailey’s—the one Janet lost when we were coasting on the hill.”

“Aw, what do you care about that book?” sneered Jack. “It isn’t yours.”

"But we borrowed it and my sister lost it, and Mrs. Bailey is always blaming us for it," explained Ted. "She wants it back very much."

"Well, she isn't going to get it!" declared the other boy. "That Joe Bailey will wish he'd never helped get my brother Pete discharged. We're even with him now!"

By this time Mrs. Martin, anxious to be on the way home lest the little pig start squealing again, looked to where Ted was talking with Jack. The mother of the Curlytops saw the lad in whose company she did not care to have Ted too much, and then she called:

"Hurry, Teddy! We must get back home, and William wants his cookies!"

But Ted was too anxious to get a trace of the missing cook-book to come when his mother called, though of course he was polite enough to answer:

"I'll be there in just a minute, Mother!" Then, turning to Jack, the Curlytop lad asked: "Where is that cook-book? I'd like, very much, to give it back to Mrs. Bailey."

"She'll never see that book again, and I'm not going to tell you where it is," snapped Jack. "I'm not mad at you," he went on to

Ted. "But my brother and I are mad at Joe Bailey and we're going to get square with him and his mother. My brother Pete is, anyhow. I'll not tell you where that book is!"

"I'll make you!" fired back Ted.

"You can't!" retorted Jack.

Then Ted made a wise decision. Letting go of Jack's coat, Ted ran back to the auto with the bag of cookies.

"What kept you so long?" asked Janet.

"I'm hungry!" complained Trouble, looking eagerly at the bag his mother had taken. "And I want to give a cake to the little pig."

"Why were you talking so long with the Mordant boy?" Mrs. Martin inquired.

"He's got Mrs. Bailey's cook-book!" burst out Ted.

"He has?" exclaimed Janet, her eyes following Jack, who was now slowly walking down the street, a satisfied smile on his face. "Make him give it back! Oh, how'd he get it? Isn't it great to have it to give back to Mrs. Bailey! She'll stop asking me about it then!"

"If Jack has the book, why didn't he give it to you?" asked Mrs. Martin.

"Well, he hasn't exactly got it," Ted had to explain. "His brother has it, but Jack won't tell me where it is. He says his brother is keeping it to get even with Joe Bailey. Pete thinks Joe got him discharged, but Mrs. Bailey says it was Pete's own fault."

"This is a queer story," said Mr. Martin. "Let me understand it, and perhaps I can do something."

Ted quickly told what Jack had said, adding that the Mordant boy would not say just where the book was.

"I think I can find a way to make him," said Mr. Martin sternly. By this time Jack was around the corner. "It seems rather queer for me to be chasing after a boy who knows where a lost cook-book is," went on the father of the Curlytops. "But this book is not like a regular one that can be bought in a store. Mrs. Bailey thinks a great deal of it, and it was the fault of Janet and Ted that it was lost. So I must do what I can to get it back."

"Yes, I think so," agreed his wife. "I should have taken the book back myself, for I knew its value. But I can't understand

how this Peter Mordant got the cook-book. It was lost in a snow bank."

"We'll soon find out!" exclaimed Mr. Martin, getting out of the auto. "I'll catch that Mordant lad and make him tell."

It did not take Mr. Martin long to catch up to Jack Mordant, who was strolling down the street, chuckling to himself and murmuring:

"The widow Bailey will never see her cook-book again!"

Just as he said that in a low voice a hand was laid on his shoulder, and, looking up, Jack saw Mr. Martin.

"What—what do you want?" faltered Jack, who was only about a year older than Ted.

"I want you to tell me about that lost cook-book you say your brother found," stated Mr. Martin. "You know finding isn't keeping, if you know to whom a lost thing belongs. Now I want you to tell me where that cook-book is!"

At first Jack was sullen and would not answer. He tried to shake off the grip Mr. Martin had on his arm, and Ted's father looked stern.

"You had better tell me before I have to

call a policeman," said Mr. Martin. Just then an officer went past on the other side of the street, and though probably Mr. Martin would not actually have had the policeman arrest Jack, for his brother Peter was the one in fault, the Mordant boy was sufficiently alarmed to say:

"Oh, all right! I'll tell! But I haven't got the book! Don't have me arrested!"

"I'm not going to," and Mr. Martin smiled. "All I want you to do is to tell me where the book is."

"Well, my brother has it."

"Where?"

"Home, I guess," half grunted Jack.

"Where do you live?" went on Mr. Martin.

"Over on Cherry Street," was the answer. "It's number hundred and sixty-eight."

"Well, I'm going there and see your brother. How did he happen to get that book belonging to Mrs. Bailey?"

"He found it." Jack was still sullen.

"It's like pulling teeth to get any information out of you," said Mr. Martin, with a smile. "But I'm going to do it. I'm not going to have Janet and Ted blamed for los-

ing that book when your brother is hiding it. How did he get it?"

"Well," said Jack, after some mumbled excuses, "he found it off to one side of the snow bank. It must have bounced there. It wasn't under the snow at all. Pete picked it up, and he knew it was Mrs. Bailey's because it had her name in it. He wanted to get square with Joe, so he kept the book."

"It's a queer thing to do," said Mr. Martin, as he let go of Jack's arm. "But it's a good thing you told me. Now I'll get the book and everything will be all right."

Jack hurried away as he was released, but there was an angry look on his face as he began running in the direction of Cherry Street. Mr. Martin went back to the auto.

"At last I have a trace of the missing cook-book," he said.

CHAPTER XVII

AN UNSUCCESSFUL SEARCH

“DADDY, where is it?” asked Janet eagerly.

She had felt so bad about losing the valuable cook-book and was so worried every time Mrs. Bailey saw her and asked about it, that it is no wonder that now the little Curlytop girl wanted to get possession of the collection of recipes and give them back to their owner.

“The book is in Jack’s brother’s room,” Mr. Martin answered. “I made Jack tell me,” he went on.

“How in the world did Peter Mordant get Mrs. Bailey’s cook-book, when Janet lost it in a snow bank?” asked Mrs. Martin. “Ted and the other boys kicked that snow-drift all to pieces, looking for the book, but they couldn’t find it. How did Peter get it?”

“The book wasn’t in the snowdrift, though Ted and Janet thought it was,” ex-

plained Mr. Martin. "It must have bounced out from beneath Janet's coat when the bob-sled upset. The book was tossed to one side, away from the drift. Peter Mordant was on the hill that night, and he picked up the book. He was angry at Joe Bailey, whether rightly so or not I don't know. But Peter decided to keep the widow's book to 'get square,' as he calls it, with Joe. So Peter hurried off with the book, and though he must have known it was being searched for, he never said a thing about having it. Soon after that he and his family moved from Cresco to this place."

"Can you get it back?" asked Ted.

"I'm going to try," was his father's answer. "Jack says the book is in Peter's room at the Mordant home on Cherry Street. I'll drive there now. I don't believe Mrs. Mordant would let her son keep Mrs. Bailey's cook-book if she knew Peter had it. I'll ask her to get it out of his room for me and the mystery will be over."

"I guess the book can't be spoiled very much from having lain in the snow, if Peter picked it up so soon after it was lost," suggested Ted.

"Probably the book is in just as good

shape as it was when you borrowed it," said Mr. Martin to his wife.

"I hope so!" said the mother of the Curlytops. "I shall be glad to see Mrs. Bailey get it back. But are you going to stop at the Mordant house now?" she asked her husband.

"Yes. Why not?" he inquired.

"That awful little pig!" replied Mrs. Martin. "He'll start squealing again pretty soon, I'm afraid. And it attracts so much attention! In spite of my desire to recover the book—and I'll never borrow another!—I'd rather you took us home now and delivered the pig to the little boy who is going to have him for a pet. Then you can come back here and get the book."

"I'm afraid that wouldn't do," said Mr. Martin, with a shake of his head. "I don't trust Jack Mordant. He may hurry home and tell his brother that we have found out he has the book, and Peter may burn it or hide it in a place where we could never find it."

"Those Mordants are mean!" declared Ted.

"And Jess is awfully stuck up!" added Janet.

"Hush, my dears! You mustn't say such things!" chided their mother. "Then you think you'd better go now to the Mordant house?" she asked her husband.

"Yes. We don't want this book to get away from us," Mr. Martin remarked.

"The little pig's asleep now," Trouble said. "I guess he won't squeal any more."

"He will if he gets hungry," went on Mrs. Martin. "And little pigs need a lot to eat."

The Martin auto was driven on through the small city of Lakeville until it reached Cherry Street. Mr. Martin had stopped once or twice to inquire the location of it from traffic policemen.

"There's a hundred and sixty-eight," Ted called, pointing to the house on which he saw this number.

"Oh, I do hope we get Mrs. Bailey's book back," murmured Janet.

Ted was looking for a sight of Jack, but did not see the Mordant boy. Trouble was engaged in trying to see if the pet pig had awakened and was drinking what little milk remained in the bottle stuck through the top of the crate.

Mr. Martin stopped the car in front of the house and went up the steps. His wife and

children saw Mrs. Mordant come to the door. Mrs. Martin did not know this lady very well, nor did Mrs. Mordant know the mother of the Curlytops. At any rate, she did not glance down toward the auto, but was immediately busily talking to Mr. Martin.

Then Mrs. Mordant opened the door wider and Mr. Martin went in.

He told, afterward, what had happened. When he first spoke to Mrs. Mordant, whom he knew slightly as she used to trade at his store, he explained why he had come.

"Your son Peter has a cook-book he found," Mr. Martin said. "It belongs to Mrs. Bailey, of Cresco."

"Oh, yes, I know her," admitted Mrs. Mordant.

"Well," went on Mr. Martin, "my son and daughter lost her cook-book," and he explained how it had come about. "It seems," he went on, "that your son Peter picked it up on the coasting hill, and kept the book—as a joke, I suppose. Perhaps he did not know how much Mrs. Bailey valued it—probably no boy could know that. Now I have come for it, and I would be very glad if you would ask your son to let me have it."

"Oh, but I can't!" exclaimed Mrs. Mor-

dant. "I would if I could," she made haste to add. "And I'm sure Peter only took the book for a joke. This is the first I ever heard he had it. But I can't ask him to give it back to you."

"Why not?" asked Mr. Martin.

"Because Peter isn't here. Only this morning he left to take a job in Harbor Dell for the summer. He is going to work in a store there. I'm sorry, but he isn't at home."

"But maybe he left the book here," suggested Mr. Martin. "He has no right to it, and I want to give it back to Mrs. Bailey, as we were responsible for its loss."

"Oh, of course, yes!" agreed Mrs. Mordant. "I wouldn't let Peter keep a book that didn't belong to him. It must be all a joke, but he never said a thing about it to me."

"His brother Jack knew of it," Mr. Martin said. "I was talking to him a little while ago, down the street. If he is at home perhaps he might know where Peter has the book."

"Jack came in a little while ago, just before you drove up," said Mrs. Mordant.

"But he hurried right out again. So I can't ask him about the book."

"Oh, Jack hurried in and hurried out again, did he?" asked Mr. Martin.

"Yes. He hardly spoke to me—just hurried out."

"Well, suppose you go up and look in Peter's room for the book," suggested the father of the Curlytops. "Very likely he has left it in his bureau drawer. It isn't necessary for me to see either of the boys. All I want is the book."

"I'll go look at once," offered Mrs. Mor-dant. "It isn't right, of course, for Peter to keep that book. I'll look for it at once."

She went upstairs and Mr. Martin could hear her rummaging around. Then she came down with a worried look on her face.

"I've searched all over Peter's room, and in Jack's too," she said, "but I can't find Mrs. Bailey's cook-book. It isn't there!"

"That is too bad!" ejaculated Mr. Mar-tin.

CHAPTER XVIII

HAPPY SUMMER DAYS

THE father of the Curlytops had a pretty good idea of what might have happened.

Either Peter Mordant, without telling his mother anything about the book, had taken it with him when he went to take up some new work in Harbor Dell; or else Jack Mordant, after having been made to tell about the finding of Mrs. Bailey's book by his brother, had slipped home before the auto arrived and taken the book away.

Mr. Martin did not want to say this to Mrs. Mordant for fear of making her feel bad about her boys playing such tricks. At the same time, Mr. Martin wanted to get the book back for the widow who thought so much of her hand-written recipes gathered over many years and which were irreplaceable unless this book were found.

"Do you mind if I go up to your son's room and have a look for that book?" Mr. Martin asked. "You see, it's very important to get it back, and I don't want my wife

and children blamed for having lost it when some other lad has it. Janet is very much upset over the matter."

"You are quite welcome to come up and look in both boys' rooms," replied Mrs. Mordant. "I looked the best I knew how, but perhaps a stranger might think of some place I didn't."

"If you don't mind I will take a look," said Ted's father, and he followed Mrs. Mordant up the stairs.

She said she was very sorry such a thing as this had happened, and she promised to have her husband speak to Jack about the matter and also write to Peter in his new home and ask where the book was.

"I heard Peter say he and Joe Bailey had some words," went on Mrs. Mordant, as she showed Mr. Martin into her older son's room. "But I didn't believe Peter would do such a thing as pick up Joe's mother's book and keep it."

"You can't tell what boys will do," answered Mr. Martin, smiling at the woman.

With Mrs. Mordant to help him, he made a search in the rooms of both boys, but he was no more successful in finding the missing cook-book than the mother had been.

"Peter must have it with him," decided Mrs. Mordant.

"Or else Jack slipped home before I got here and took the book away," said Mr. Martin to himself. "I think I'll speak to Mr. Mordant about the matter later. I'll come over some evening and see him." But of this he said nothing to Mrs. Mordant.

"Well, I guess the book isn't here," Mr. Martin said, at length. "I'm sorry, for Ted and Janet felt sure it would be found and that they would no longer be blamed. I'm very sorry."

"So am I," declared Peter's mother. "And as soon as I can find the book you shall have it to give back to Mrs. Bailey."

Mr. Martin went back to his waiting family, and every one except Trouble was greatly disappointed at the failure to find the book. As for Trouble, he was too much occupied in watching the little pig.

"He's eating up all the milk in the sticking-up bottle," Trouble reported, after leaning down to take a look. "He drinks it up awful fast. Maybe he'll squeal again pretty soon."

"Mercy! I hope not!" exclaimed his mother. "Please hurry home and give that

Layton boy his pet," she begged of her husband.

"All right!" agreed the Curlytops' father, and the auto started off. Ted and Janet did not know what to think. Then Janet asked:

"Will you tell Mrs. Bailey about Peter having her book, Daddy?"

"I think I shall," decided Mr. Martin. "It is only fair that she should know it isn't your fault that her book is being kept from her and that we are making every effort to find it."

This made Ted and Janet feel better.

Trouble was right about the pig drinking up all the milk from the bottle that stuck down through a hole in the top of the crate. And Mrs. Martin was right when she said that little pigs soon grow hungry after they have taken quite a bit of sour milk. For they were not more than half way to Cresco before the pet began to grunt. He squealed gently at first, then gradually the squeals grew louder and louder until persons in passing autos turned around to learn the reason for the queer noise. Persons in the streets who heard the pig seemed to know what it was and laughed.

"For goodness' sake, feed that pig!" cried Mrs. Martin.

Ted poured more sour milk from the large bottle into the small one with the rubber nipple, and the little animal began eagerly to suck again, his squeals dying away. Nor did he finish the milk until the auto arrived at the Layton home, when the pig was delivered to its new owner.

"Much obliged for bringing this animal to my boy," said Mr. Layton, with a dubious look at the pet. "I didn't know what my brother was going to send, or maybe I wouldn't have taken a pig. I certainly wouldn't have asked you to get it. Was he much trouble?"

"He'll not be if you can keep him full of sour milk all the while," laughed Mr. Martin. "But he got out of the crate and we had to chase him—at least the Curlytops did," he added.

"Oh, shucks! I'm sorry about that!" exclaimed Mr. Layton. "You must have had a lot of bother."

"Oh, it was fun!" asserted Ted.

The children went to bed early that night and Mr. Martin, on his way downtown in the evening, stopped to tell Mrs. Bailey about

Peter Mordant having picked up the book of recipes.

"Mercy sakes! I never heard tell of such a thing!" exclaimed the widow. "Such a boy! But do you think I'll ever get my book back? There are recipes in it a hundred years old. I can't remember a third part of them, no, not a twelfth part!"

Mr. Martin knew then what the children meant when they said Mrs. Bailey was always talking in fractions.

"I am going to see Mr. Mordant and have him ask Peter or Jack where your book is," Mr. Martin said. "I think you will get it back."

"Oh, I'll be so glad!" exclaimed the widow. "I couldn't believe Janet or Ted would lose my wonderful book."

"Well, they lost it, all right, I'm sorry to say, but Peter found it," said Mr. Martin. "Now don't worry any more. I'm doing all I can to get it back for you."

"Thank you," murmured Mrs. Bailey. "I shall be delighted to have my book again. There is one recipe for making orange short-cake—"

She would have talked much longer if Mr.

Martin had remained to listen, but he had to hurry away.

A few days later, when Ted and Tom had gone fishing and when Janet and Lola were playing tennis with two little girls whose older sister had a tennis court in their yard, Mr. Martin went to see Mr. Mordant in Lakeville. He had written before this to the father of Peter and Jack, telling him all about the cook-book.

"Jack didn't take it," Mr. Mordant said. "It must have been Peter who took the book with him to his new job in Harbor Dell. I'll write him and tell him to send the book back at once."

"I wish you would," said Mr. Martin.

There seemed nothing more he could do about the book at present, so he put the matter out of his mind.

Spring was rapidly turning into warmer weather, and glorious summer days were at hand. It would soon be time for the long vacation, but, as yet, Mr. and Mrs. Martin had not decided where to go. A number of places were spoken of, but none settled upon.

"But, Mother," pleaded Janet, "I wish we would soon know where we are going."

"Why?" asked Mrs. Martin, smiling. "What difference does it make?"

"I want to know what sort of clothes to make for Estelle and Adelaide," Janet explained. Janet was fast outgrowing her liking for playing with dolls, but she still clung to two that she had loved for years. "If we're going to the seashore I have to make them bathing suits. If we go to the mountains I'll have to make some rough dresses so the two girls can climb high hills."

"Make both kinds," Ted suggested.

"Well, I could do that," Janet agreed. "I guess I'll go and talk to Lola about it. They don't yet know where they're going for the summer, either."

"I'd like to go to camp," Ted remarked.

The happy summer days of glorious weather soon came. The only difficulty was that the Curlytops and William did not like to go to school. It was so lovely out of doors. And it was the time for examinations, which no one cares for.

But Ted and Janet did well. They passed and would go to a higher grade when school opened again in the fall. Trouble, too, was now old enough to leave the kindergarten and go into the first grade. He came home

the last day of school much excited about this prospect.

"And when I go to school again in September I don't want you to call me Trouble any more," he said to his mother.

"What do you want to be called?" asked Ted.

"I want to be called Bill! And I'm going to have my hair cut!" William announced.

"Well, I'll let you have your hair cut short," his mother agreed. "But I will not have you called Bill if I can help it."

"What will you call me then?" Trouble asked.

"I'll have you called Will," said his mother. The small boy thought this over for a moment. Then he smiled and said:

"Yes, that's a nice name. Will! Will! When I go back to school I'm going to be called Will and have my hair cut short."

"You are growing up!" sighed his mother. "My Curlytops are also growing up," she went on, and she did not know whether to be glad or sorry. Undoubtedly she was a little of both.

The weather grew warmer, and more glorious were the summer days of the long

vacation. The Martins had not yet decided where to go.

One afternoon Tom Taylor met Ted down the street and said:

"I think something has happened at your house."

"Why so?" asked Ted. "Oh, maybe they've found Mrs. Bailey's cook-book!" he went on eagerly.

"No, I think it isn't that," said Tom. "But your sister is out in the front yard fairly jumping around, and my sister is doing the same thing. And they're singing and hollering like anything. I guess something has happened."

"It can't be anything bad if Janet is singing," said Ted. "But come on—we'll find out!"

The two boys set off on a run.

CHAPTER XIX

THE WRECK OF THE "JANLO"

"How did you happen to see all this?" asked Ted, as he hurried along beside his chum. "I mean all this about Lola and Janet dancing and singing."

"Why, I was coming over to get you to go fishing," Tom explained. "When I got to your house I saw my sister and yours acting so half-crazily that I wondered what had happened. Just then Sam Black said he saw you down the street, so I ran to tell you."

"I'm glad you did," Teddy remarked. "But I guess it can't be much of anything or they'd be crying instead of laughing and singing."

"Well, it's something, anyhow!" declared Tom.

When Ted and Tom reached the Martin house, there, indeed, out in the front yard stood Janet and Lola, and they were running about, as if they were playing tag, singing the while. Trouble sat on the front steps watching them.

"What's the matter?" panted Ted, as he and Tom hurried through the gate.

"Tell us what happened?" Tom added.

"Oh, you'll never guess!" shouted Janet. "It's the best news you ever heard!"

"There! What'd I tell you?" asked Ted, turning to his friend. "I knew it couldn't be anything bad."

"Well, you never can tell what girls are doing," Tom murmured, while his sister added:

"Oh, such good times as we'll have!"

Then Janet broke in to say:

"We might as well tell you boys, for you'd never guess if we didn't. Listen! We're all going to Harbor Dell for the summer!"

"Harbor Dell?" cried Ted.

"All of us going?" asked Tom.

"That's where I'm going to sail a ship," added Trouble. "And when we come back, after summer is over, I'm going to have my hair cut and you'll have to call me Will. I'd rather be called Bill, but mother says Will is better."

"Harbor Dell," said Ted in a low voice to Tom. "Why, that's where Pete Mordant went to work in a store and he's got Mrs. Bailey's cook-book and won't give it back."

"Maybe we can make him," suggested Tom.

"Wait until we hear all about this," suggested his chum. "I don't see how the girls heard about it before we did."

They, by turns, Janet and Lola explained that their fathers and mothers had only a short while before come to a decision to take the two families to Harbor Dell for the summer. Mr. Martin had had a chance to hire two cottages close together, as the bungalows had been in the summer camp of a few years before, when the Curlytops helped catch the escaped pets of Animal Joe.

Then Mr. Martin called up Mr. Taylor on the telephone, and asked if the father of Tom and Lola had decided on any place for the summer vacation.

"Daddy hadn't," Lola explained, "and he said he thought it would be fun if we could go together again as we did before. Mother liked it, too, and when they told me I could spend the summer near you, Janet, I said it would be wonderful."

"So that's how it was," and Ted's sister took up the story. "All of a sudden mother and father and Mr. and Mrs. Taylor made up their minds to go to Harbor Dell, and

that's why Lola and I are so happy. Aren't we?" she asked, putting her arms around her playmate as they once more started to dance around the yard.

"I wondered why you were acting so crazily," chuckled Tom. "That's what made me run to tell Ted."

"We aren't crazy at all—so there!" exclaimed Lola. "And I guess you boys are just as glad you're going to Harbor Dell as we are."

"I guess we are," agreed Ted, with a laugh.

Not since they had got ready to go to their summer camp some time before, as has been related in the book previous to this, had the Curlytops and their chums had so much to talk and think about. Ted and Tom planned to do all sorts of things on the water, from going fishing to making a boat and sailing on a long cruise. Their sisters talked of their bathing suits and of how they would have picnics and excursions and go crabbing.

"Well, I hope we start pretty soon," sighed Tom, after many things had been talked over by the four sitting on the Martins' front steps. "Summer won't last forever."

"Oh, there's lots of it left yet," declared Ted. "It's only just started."

When Tom and Lola went home a little later and when Mr. Martin came home from his store, the children learned that the two families were to go to Harbor Dell the following Monday. This was Thursday, so there was not much time left in which to get ready.

"It won't take me long to pack," said Ted.

"Me, either," echoed his sister.

In less time than seemed possible the Monday morning of the start for Harbor Dell came around. Meanwhile, the packing had been done, the Cresco homes of the Martin and Taylor families were made ready for closing for the summer and the children were all on edge with the excitement of the start.

At last the autos were loaded, the boys and girls got in, good-byes were called to friends and neighbors, and they were off.

"Hurray for Harbor Dell!" cried Jan, as their car started.

"You shouldn't say 'Hurray,' you should say 'All aboard!' because it's the seashore we're going to," Ted declared. "Tom and I are going to have a boat," he added.

"Where you going to get it?" Janet wanted to know.

"Going to make it," answered her brother.

"Will you let Lola and me have a ride in it?"

"Sure!" answered Ted, who was kind and good-natured.

The Taylor auto had gone on ahead. Ted and Janet, sitting in the rear of their car with Trouble, heard their father and mother talking.

"You didn't find out anything more about Mrs. Bailey's cook-book, did you?" asked Mrs. Martin of her husband.

"No," he answered. "I went over to see Mr. Mordant, and he said he had written to his son Peter in Harbor Dell, asking where the book was, but the young man didn't say."

"I wonder why?" inquired Mrs. Martin.

"Well, either he hasn't the book or else he has it and doesn't want to let it be known where it is," answered Mr. Martin. "That Peter needs looking after. If we see him in Harbor Dell I'll make him give back that book. It's silly of him to keep it."

"That's what I think," agreed Mrs. Martin.

"Maybe we can get that book away from Peter if we see him and he has it," whispered Ted to his sister.

"How?" she asked.

"Oh, I don't know, but maybe we can," was all Ted could think of to reply.

Aside from a punctured tire on the Martin auto, which did not take long to remedy, for there was a spare on the rear of the car, nothing much happened on the way to Harbor Dell. They stopped for lunch at a quaint little town, and William caused trouble, as usual, by something he did.

In the restaurant where the two families had lunch was a pretty, little, gray kitten. And after the autos had left the town and were a mile away, Mrs. Martin discovered that her little boy had smuggled the pussy into the auto under his jacket.

"Why, Trouble! what have you there?" his mother asked, when she heard the little cat mewling. It had been contentedly sleeping up to this point.

"It's my pussy pet!" William answered.

"Oh, isn't it sweet!" exclaimed Janet, looking at the little animal.

"Where'd you get it?" Mrs. Martin asked.

"It was in the place where we ate," replied Ted.

"Oh, Trouble, you naughty boy!" exclaimed Mrs. Martin, shaking her finger at William. "Now we've got to go all the way back and take the kitten home."

"Oh, can't I keep her?" begged William.

"No, indeed!" his father answered, and Trouble knew it was of no use to tease after that. "They may be very fond of that pussy back in the restaurant," Mr. Martin went on. "We must return it to them."

By speeding his car on the back trip and by hurrying along after the pussy was delivered to its restaurant home, where the little son of the owner was glad to get back his pet, Mr. Martin soon caught up to Mr. Taylor, who had gone on ahead. Then, in the middle of the afternoon, Harbor Dell was reached.

"Oh, what a dandy place!" cried Ted, when he had seen where the two cottages were set, close together on a strip of beach in a grove of sycamore trees. On one side of the cottages was the rolling ocean, and on the other, several hundred feet away, was a quiet, shallow stretch of water called "Oyster River."

This stream was not really a river, but a long inlet from the ocean. But it was not rough like the sea. The water of the ocean got into Oyster River only by flowing around a long point of land, and by the time it got past this and opposite the two cottages, all the roughness was gone from the sea waves.

"It will be very safe for the children to play on the beach of Oyster River," Mr. Martin said to his wife and to the parents of Lola and Tom.

Waiting only long enough to get on some old clothes, the Curlytops and their friends left the grown folks to unpack the cars and settle the cottages and ran down to the sea. For a time they watched the waves roll up the sandy beach with a swishing, hissing sound as the waters surged in among the shells and pebbles. Then Ted called:

"Let's go over to the river. It's quieter there."

"And maybe we can find a boat," suggested Tom.

Across the strip of land that separated the ocean from the river ran the children, laughing and shouting. Their parents and the two maids were still busy getting things to

rights. Trouble tagged along after Janet and Ted.

"Watch out for William!" warned Mrs. Martin.

"We will!" Janet promised.

Drawn up on the beach not far from the cottages, was an old rowboat. There was only one oar in it, but Ted saw a long pole a short distance off, and Tom spied a part of an old piece of canvas farther along the beach.

"Oh, we can make a sailboat!" Tom cried.

"Sure enough!" agreed his chum.

"We'll help, if you give us a ride," bargained Janet.

"Sure we will!" Tom agreed.

It did not take long for the boys and girls to fasten the stick upright in the old boat for a mast. Then the piece of canvas was tied on for a sail. When the boat was pushed into the water of Oyster River, it floated and, to the delight of the children, the wind blew out the sail.

"All aboard! We're going on a voyage!" cried Ted.

"All aboard! All aboard!" echoed his chum.

Janet helped Trouble in, and she and Lola

took their places "up front," as Lola called it, but Tom said she must say "in the bow," which his sister did in order to be obliging.

"You steer and I'll manage the sail," Ted said to his chum, for the rope on the lower end of the sail had to be held in place, there being no cleats about which to take turns with it as there would have been on a regular sailing craft.

"What'll we name our boat?" asked Ted, when they had been sailing gently along for a few minutes, much to the delight of the girls and Trouble, as well as to the boys.

"Let's call it the *Janlo*," suggested Tom, who was steering by holding the oar over the back, or stern, of the craft.

"*Janlo*—that's a funny name," remarked Ted's sister.

"It's the first part of your name—Jan," explained Tom, "and the first part of Lola's name—Lo."

"Oh, isn't that lovely!" cried Lola, her face beaming.

"Wonderful!" agreed Janet, much pleased.

It was safe on Oyster River, or at least the children thought so, for the inlet of the sea was very shallow, though it was several miles

long and about two miles wide. The parents of the children had no fear for them, though, to tell the truth, they did not dream that the boys and girls were out sailing.

But that is really what the Curlytops and their playmates were doing, if you can call such a queer boat as they had made a sailing craft. Anyhow, the party was having fun, and Trouble was laughing and shouting with delight.

"We mustn't go too far," Janet said.

"No," agreed Lola. "It will soon be time to go back and help our mothers get supper."

"Oh, we'll turn around pretty soon," promised Ted. "But we want to see how the *Janlo* sails, and she has to have a fair trial over a good course. To-morrow we'll go on a longer voyage."

"Sure!" agreed Tom.

"And I'll bring my pop-gun and shoot fish and we can make a fire and cook our dinner!" added Trouble.

But the *Janlo* was not destined to make a very long voyage on her first trip. All of a sudden, while the attention of those in the boat was drawn to Trouble, who almost fell

overboard, there was a lurch, a bump, and the craft stopped suddenly.

"What's the matter?" asked Janet.

"We're wrecked!" gasped Lola. "Oh, look, we bumped into something!"

"We bumped into an island!" said Ted, with a laugh. "It isn't much of a wreck. We've just gone aground, that's all! I'll help you push off, Tom!"

"Maybe we can't push off," said the other boy, who was already trying, by means of the oar, to shove the *Janlo* from the muddy bank of a low-lying island. "I guess we're stuck, and we're going to be stuck worse in a little while."

"Why?" asked Ted.

"Because the tide's going down. The water's getting shallower all the while. I guess we're shipwrecked, all right!"

CHAPTER XX

THE POTATO ROAST

FOR a few moments after the grounding of the *Janlo* on the island in Oyster River, the two girls wondered if they should have to stay on the low, muddy island until the next high tide. But when they saw Ted and Tom, who were older than their sisters, laughing and making jokes about it, Janet and her friend decided there was nothing much to worry about.

"How did it happen?" asked Janet, as she looked at the island into one side of which the boat had poked its prow. The island, which was of good size, consisted of mud, sand, a few shells and, in the middle, some low bushes and trees, out of which birds were flying.

"It happened because Tom didn't steer straight," Ted asserted.

"I steered as good as I could!" retorted Tom. "I didn't know there were any islands in this old river."

"Neither did I. It really wasn't any more

your fault than it was mine. We were both looking to see Jan trying to stop Trouble from falling overboard. In a way it's all Trouble's fault."

"I didn't do anything!" protested the little fellow. "I didn't even catch a fish!"

"Of course you didn't, dear!" said Janet soothingly. "It wasn't your fault. But what are we going to do?" she asked, when she saw that the efforts of Ted and Tom to push the boat off the island by means of the oar were unavailing.

"How long have we got to stay here?" asked Lola.

"Until it gets high tide again," her brother answered.

"Oh!" murmured the two girls, their anxiety returning. They knew something of ocean tides, having studied geography in school, and they remembered that it was about twelve hours between each high tide, so it would be that long before their boat could be floated if it could not be pushed off the island.

"But we aren't far from home," Janet said, looking back. "We can yell for help."

Indeed, the *Janlo* had been wrecked within hearing of the cottages on the beach.

Owing to a bend in the river, the cottages themselves could not be observed, but the boys and girls could see the place from which they had started on this voyage.

"Yes, let's call!" agreed Lola. "I don't want to stay here all night."

"It would be fun, and we could camp out if we had something to eat," declared Ted.

"But we haven't anything to eat," observed his sister. "So let's yell!"

The girls were just opening their mouths to do this and Trouble was going to add his voice to theirs when Ted exclaimed:

"Wait! I've an idea!"

"What kind?" his chum wanted to know.

"A good idea," answered Ted. "Look!" he went on, leaning over the side and pointing to the water. "It isn't deep at all. You and I can take off our shoes and stockings, Tom, wade out and push the boat off. With us out it will be light. And if Jan and Lola go to the stern and take Trouble with them, that will make the bow light and we can push it off easy."

"I guess we can," Tom agreed, beginning to unlace his shoes.

"I'm going in wading, too," asserted Trouble, but Janet explained that Ted and

Tom were only going to save the boat from shipwreck, and she finally induced Trouble to give up the idea. But it was not easy.

Just as Ted had thought, when he and his chum got out of the boat, it was that much lighter. And when the girls and Trouble moved toward the stern, that further lifted the bow, which had run into the mud and sand at the end of the little island.

"Push hard now!" cried Ted to his chum, as they put their hands to the bow. "Push all you can!"

"I am!" panted Tom.

"Do you want us to get out and help?" asked Janet, as she watched the struggling boys.

"No—I—I guess we can—do—it!" Ted panted.

"Together now!" cried Tom.

The boys gave another shove. For a moment it seemed that the boat was going to be stuck there until the next high tide. But, all of a sudden, Lola cried:

"We're moving!"

"Yes, we're sliding off!" added Janet.

"Push—harder!" panted Ted.

"All—right!" gasped Tom.

Then, so suddenly that the two boys nearly

lost their balance and almost fell, the boat moved out of the mud and away from the island and floated in deeper water, though, at that, it was only about up to Ted's knees.

"Now we're all right!" Tom announced, when he saw that the *Janlo* was once more afloat.

"Better sail us home," remarked Janet.

"Mother will be wondering where we are."

"I think I see somebody down on the beach now, waving to us," added Lola.

Indeed, figures could be observed standing on the spot whence the *Janlo* had set out on her first voyage.

"We'll start back in a minute," promised Ted. "Tom and I just want to walk over this island to see if it's a good place to go camping."

"Say, that would be fun!" agreed Tom.

"No!" exclaimed Janet. "We must go home! It's getting late and mother will worry. So will Mrs. Taylor. Take us home now and you boys can come here to-morrow and see what kind of an island it is."

"That's what I say," chimed in Lola.

"All right—that's what we'll do!" declared Ted.

The boys got back into the boat, which was

now saved from shipwreck, and, after pushing the craft out with the oar, the wind once more caught the sail and back the children voyaged. The wind had changed with the falling tide, or they never could have sailed back, being able only to move straight before the breeze.

"This is lots of fun, isn't it?" inquired Ted of his chum, as he wiggled his bare toes in the warm rays of the setting sun. For the boys had decided it was better not to put on their shoes and stockings until they got back home. Tom said they might be shipwrecked again.

"It sure is great!" Ted's chum agreed. "We'll go sailing again to-morrow."

"And take something to eat and stay on the island," added Ted.

"You'd better wait and see if mother will let you," warned Janet.

"Oh, she will!" Ted was quite sure of this.

In a short time the *Janlo* had grounded on the beach near the two cottages. Mrs. Martin and Mrs. Taylor were there.

"Where in the world have you been?" asked the mother of the Curlytops. "We've been looking all over for you!"

"Oh, we just went for a little sail," Ted explained. "We didn't go very far."

"We got wreckshipped!" broke in Trouble, and they all had to laugh when he said the word backward.

"We were just stuck on that island where you saw us," Janet told her mother. "It was fun!"

"You must be more careful," warned Mrs. Taylor.

"We couldn't help it! The tide went down and left us stuck," her son reported. "Maybe I should have steered different, though," he added. "I will, next time."

"Well, come in and get cleaned up," said Mrs. Martin to her three. Mrs. Taylor gave the same advice to her two, adding:

"It's nearly time for supper."

"And I sure am going to eat!" boasted Tom.

"I'm hungry, too," added his chum.

"We'll have some more fun after supper," Janet said to Lola as they parted.

"Oh, yes. It's going to be lovely here!"

The cottages rented by the Taylor and the Martin families were furnished, so there was not much to do in getting settled for the

summer's stay except to make the beds and get the meals.

When this had been done, and when the Curlytops and their friends had showed what good appetites they had, there came a twilight hour in which they wandered along the ocean beach and listened to the booming of the surf.

Early the next morning Tom and Ted were up and were quickly down on the beach of Oyster River to look at the *Janlo*. It was safely drawn up on the sand, out of reach of the high tide, though the sail had blown down in the night.

"We'll have to fasten it on better," decided Ted.

"Sure!" agreed Tom. "And after we do that let's have a potato roast over on the island. We'll go up easy, so we'll not get the boat stuck in the mud again."

"All right," assented Ted.

When they asked Mr. Martin, as well as Mr. Taylor, Ted and Tom received permission to sail the *Janlo* to Wreck Island, as they had named the place. There they planned to make a bonfire and roast potatoes for their lunch.

"Then you won't want any lunch at home,

I suppose?" asked Mrs. Martin, as Ted started off, his pockets bulging with potatoes.

"Oh, sure we'll be home to our regular dinner!" he said. "The potatoes won't be much."

"Just a little picnic," added Tom, and his mother and Mrs. Martin laughed.

Janet and Lola were invited to go along on the potato picnic, but the girls said they would rather put on their new bathing suits and play on the ocean beach, and so could not go with their brothers.

"Well, we'll take you next time," promised Ted.

Trouble teased so hard to go with the boys that Mrs. Martin asked if Ted and Tom would not take him. After considering the matter, they agreed.

"I'll bring my own potatoes," William offered.

"Oh, we have plenty," Tom answered.

"If we're good to Trouble and take him with us a couple of times so my mother won't have him teasing around the house, she'll let us do a lot of things she wouldn't otherwise let us do," Ted whispered to his chum. "Trouble is a lot of bother, but we'll be let

to come to the island a lot of times if we bring him the first few times."

"Sure," assented Tom.

It did not take Ted and Tom long, under the old sail which was more securely fastened to the *Janlo*, to make the voyage to Wreck Island. They explored it, which did not take a great while.

"I guess nobody lives here," said Ted, as he emptied his pockets of the potatoes.

"Doesn't seem so," agreed Tom. "Well, let's make believe we're pirates come ashore to bury our gold, and we'll cook a meal."

"Sure!" assented Ted.

"I'll be a pirate, too," declared Trouble. "Only I haven't got any gold."

"Neither have we!" chuckled Ted. "We're only making believe."

Ted and Tom had both been taught by their fathers how to make a fire safely. They were also always careful to put it out when they left, so it would not spread and burn, perhaps a whole forest, though of course on this island there was no danger of such a thing as that happening.

It did not take long for the blaze to be kindled, and then, when there were plenty of red embers, the potatoes were put in them to

roast. Salt and butter had been brought along in a tin box, and also some crackers, so the boys were going to have a substantial lunch.

"But we'll eat again when we get home," said Tom.

"Sure!" agreed Ted.

At last the potatoes were considered baked. They were rather burned on the outside, but, as Ted remarked, this charred skin could be broken off and thrown away.

"We only want to eat the inside part," he said.

"That's right," chimed in his chum.

They ate their potatoes, nibbled the crackers and thought what a fine time they were having. All of a sudden, Ted whispered:

"Hark!"

"What's the matter?" asked Tom.

"I hear voices! I think somebody is coming," went on Ted in a whisper. "Listen!"

CHAPTER XXI

CAMPING OUT

THE two older boys stopped chewing on the potatoes and crackers, the better to listen. Trouble, wondering at the sudden silence of his brother and Tom, was going to say something, but Ted put his hand over the little lad's lips.

"What's matter?" Trouble mumbled, under his breath. "Are we playing a game?"

"Sort of," Ted whispered, the better to make his little brother understand the need of silence.

Both Tom and Ted could hear voices on the far end of the island. There was a screen of bushes and tangled underbrush between the potato picnickers and the strangers.

"Somebody is coming here," remarked Tom, in a low voice. "I wonder who it can be. Nobody lives here."

"Maybe it's the girls," suggested Ted. "They might have got another boat and rowed over, because our boat's here yet," a fact which he made sure of by looking down

to the beach where the boat was safely drawn up out of reach of the tide which was slowly rising.

"I don't believe they'd come over all by themselves, though they might, because they learned to row when we were in the summer camp on Lake Rimón," said Tom. "But we can take a look. It sounds more like boys' voices to me."

"Yes, they do," his chum admitted. "But I guess it's some fellows like us, coming here for a picnic."

"Maybe. Well, let's go look. We have as good a right here as anybody," asserted Tom. "My father said this island belonged to Harbor Dell and anybody that wanted to could camp on it."

"Sure!" agreed Ted. "We'll look. Now, don't make any noise if you come with us, Trouble," he whispered. For Ted took it for granted they must take William with them. He would not stay alone near the potato fire while the older boys went to see who was coming on the island.

"I'll be quiet," promised the little boy.

Cautiously, Ted led the way, followed by William, while Tom brought up as a guard in the rear. After the first murmur of

strange voices the two chums heard nothing. But as they made their way along a little path through the bushes they once more heard the mumble of talk.

"Here's a good place to hide it!" some one said.

"That sure is," agreed some one else. "They'll never find it here, or even think of looking for it."

"What do you s'pose they are talking about?" inquired Ted.

As yet the boys could not see the strangers who were hidden by the tall bushes.

"I don't know," Ted answered. "Unless maybe it's real pirates hiding real gold," he added, without a smile.

"Oh, it couldn't be that!" declared Tom.

"But somebody is going to hide something," went on Ted, and with this his chum agreed.

The two lads were almost at the end of the screen of bushes, and in a few seconds they would have had a view of the others who had come to the island when Trouble slipped and fell into a little hole.

"Oh! Oh!" he wailed loudly. "Get me out! Get me out!"

Ted wheeled about to see what had hap-

pened to his little brother. At the same time Tom sprang forward to the rescue. This made a noise—a crackling of brambles, a breaking of branches, to say nothing of Trouble's loud shouts. But he was not hurt, and was soon lifted out of the hole by his brother and Tom. It was a hole such as a dog might have dug, for nothing like foxes or other wild animals would have stayed on that small island.

"Now, you're all right," Ted remarked, as he brushed some dirt off his brother's clothes and wiped away a couple of tears that William had managed to squeeze out of his eyes.

"Yes, I'm all right," Trouble agreed.

"But I guess the noise we made scared off whoever it was on the island," Tom said when they were once more quiet, so they could listen.

"I guess so," agreed his chum. "We'll soon see."

And when they had come out on the far side of the bushes and had a clear view of the other end of the island, they saw two figures in a boat, rowing away as fast as they could.

"We scared 'em!" said Tom.

"It looks so," agreed Ted. "And say—do you know who I think those fellows are?"

"No. Who?" asked Tom.

"Peter Mordant and his brother Jack!"

Tom looked at the fast vanishing figures in the boat. Then he shook his head.

"No," he went on, "that isn't Pete or Jack. They must be some fishermen. See how old their clothes are."

"I know," agreed Ted. "But Pete and Jack could put on old clothes to come here."

"What would they come here for?" Tom wanted to know. "Besides, Jack is in Lakeville, you told me. It's only Pete who came here."

"Well, maybe that isn't Jack, but I'm sure it's Pete, even if he is dressed like a fisherman," Ted insisted. "And I know what he came here for."

"What?"

"To hide that cook-book!"

"Oh, go on!" laughed Tom. "You're thinking too much about that cook-book. I don't believe that was even Pete Mordant at all. It's just a fisherman."

"It does look like one," admitted Ted, while Trouble began amusing himself by digging a hole in the sand. "But why would a

fisherman talk of hiding something? And why would a fisherman run away from this island in such a hurry just because he heard us make a noise?" Ted wanted to know.

But this was more than Tom knew how to answer. He stared after the retreating boat, as did Ted, and the Curlytop boy could not be sure who the rowers were.

"Anyhow, they didn't hide anything, I guess," Ted remarked, as he and his chum walked down to the beach where the strange boatmen had hauled their craft up on the sand for a little while, before they rowed away in such a hurry.

After roaming about for half an hour, having finished their lunch of roasted potatoes and crackers, Ted and his chum were ready to go back to the mainland and have, as Tom said, "a real dinner."

Trouble begged to stay longer on the island, saying he wanted to dig a deeper hole.

"There's plenty of sand on the beach back home where you can dig," Ted told his brother, and this satisfied William.

By the time the boys were rowing and sailing back to the mainland, the other boat was out of sight around a bend in the shore.

Ted shook his head. There was something queer about it all, he thought.

It was said that the boys rowed and sailed their boat, the *Janlo*, because that is exactly what they did. There was a good wind blowing them to Wreck Island, but when they wanted to sail back the breeze had almost died out, so the sail was not of much use. But Tom and Ted had found another oar to put in their craft, and they could use these when they could not depend on the wind. So it was part rowing and part sailing.

That evening Ted told his father about the two men who had been in such a hurry to get away from the island after Trouble had started crying because he had fallen into a hole, and the Curlytop boy suggested that it might have been Peter and Jack seeking a hiding place for Mrs. Bailey's cook-book.

"It might be so," admitted Mr. Martin. "I haven't had time to seek Pete in Harbor Dell yet, but I will after we get settled, and if he has that book I'll make him give it up."

There was so much to do at the seashore resort, where the Taylor and Martin families had come for the summer vacation, that Ted and his sister did not give much thought

to Mrs. Bailey's missing book of recipes. For one thing, they began to feel, though wrongly, that they were not to blame because the widow did not have it. The blame was all on Peter Mordant.

"And, besides," added Janet, "we don't see Mrs. Bailey every day, as we did when we were in Cresco, and she can't be always asking if we have her book."

"That's right," agreed Ted. "And telling us she can't remember one-thirtieth of the recipes!" and Ted made a little face, showing his dislike of the subject.

It was two or three days after the discovery of the queer strangers on Wreck Island that Ted ran over to the Taylor cottage one day, shouting for Tom and saying:

"I can go if you can! I can go if you can!"

"Go where?" asked Tom, running out on the porch.

"Camping," replied Ted. "I asked mother if we could make a little tent and go to Wreck Island and stay all night. She said I could if you could. Won't that be fun?"

"Great!" agreed Tom. "I'll ask my mother."

It did not take Mrs. Taylor long to say yes when she understood that Ted's father and mother thought it all right.

"Hurray! We're going to camp out!" cried Ted, when Tom said he could go. "We'll have a dandy time! We'll cook our own meals and sleep in a tent."

"Just us—no girls!" said Tom.

"No girls, of course!" agreed Ted. "Anyhow, I don't believe Janet and Lola would want to stay on Wreck Island all night."

CHAPTER XXII

A LOST DINNER

TED and Tom could hardly believe the good luck that had come to them—that they were to be allowed to spend a night alone on Wreck Island in a tent, just like real hunters or trappers or even pirates, as Ted remarked.

“I asked dad, but at first I didn’t think he’d let me,” Ted told his chum, when they were talking over their plans.

“And I never thought my folks would let me,” remarked Tom.

The truth of the matter was that when Ted first spoke of the subject Mr. Martin did not think very favorably of it. But he talked to Mr. Taylor and the latter said:

“Why, there’s really no danger at all on Wreck Island. I think it would do the boys good to let them spend a night or two in the open all by themselves. It will make them more manly. My boy is growing up, you know.”

“So is mine, and I agree with you,” Mr.

Martin said. "We'll let them try camping out."

Thus it had come about, and Ted and Tom were wild with delight. They danced and capered on the sand in front of the cottages, and ran like wild Indians among the sycamore trees.

No time was lost by Ted and Tom in getting ready for their great adventure. They were to take a shelter in the shape of a tent made of some old sails. This tent they had made themselves, and while it was not a very good one, the fathers of the lads thought it would answer.

"It's better to let them use something they made themselves than to buy one," said Mr. Martin.

The tent, some blankets, some food, and a few extra articles of clothing, together with two flashlights, made up the boys' baggage, and several times, when they were getting their things together, Ted or Tom would ask the girls:

"Don't you wish you were going to camp out?"

"No, we don't!" Janet would answer.

"I don't want to wake up in the night and

find myself being carried off by a bear!" said Lola.

"There aren't any bears on Wreck Island!" laughed her brother.

It was planned that the next morning Ted and Tom should load their things into their sailboat, the *Janlo*, and make their way to Wreck Island. There they would get their lunch and supper, and stay all night, sleeping in their tent, and come home the next day after the noon meal.

"And maybe, if we have enough stuff left to eat," said Ted, "we'll stay another night."

"All right, if you want to," remarked Mr. Martin, glancing smilingly at Mr. Taylor.

"And maybe we'll come back, get more grub," went on Tom, "and stay two or three nights."

"Very well," his father agreed.

"But I think," said Mr. Martin to Mr. Taylor a little later, "that one night of camping will be enough for our boys."

"I think so, myself," agreed Mr. Taylor. "It will be lonesomer than they think."

However, it was with hearts filled with hope and pride that Ted and Tom got into their funny little boat, with their bundles,

called good-by to Janet, Trouble and Lola, who came to the beach to see them off, and started for Wreck Island.

The wind was fair, and the boys could sail up. It did not take them long to reach the place where they had been "shipwrecked" about a week before.

"Ah, this is the life!" cried Ted, as he jumped ashore.

"It sure is!" agreed his chum, as he began to unload the boat.

"We must be sure to pull the *Janlo* high enough on the beach so the tide won't take it away," warned Ted.

The first thing the boy campers did was to put up their tent. This did not take them long, for it was a simple shelter and did not need to be put up very strongly, as there would be no heavy wind storms to blow it down.

"It's just to keep off the night dew and dampness," Mr. Martin had explained to the lads.

"Now, we'll get something to eat," said Ted, when the tent was erected in a sheltered place. "After that we'll explore and see if we have any adventures. Then we'll get

supper and go to sleep, and to-morrow we'll fish and do lots of other things."

"Oh, what fun!" exclaimed Tom.

They had brought with them plenty of food, and for dinner next day they planned to have chicken potpie. Mrs. Taylor had made this, cooking it in her cottage. All the boys would need to do would be to warm it in a kettle hung over their campfire.

Their noon meal that first day of camping did not take long to eat. Then they wandered about the island, but did not have many adventures, except to see a large number of fiddler crabs on shore. But the boys were happy, and when the afternoon drew to a close and they fried some bacon in a pan over the fire, and also some eggs, two happier or better satisfied lads could not have been found.

"When we get sleepy we'll go to bed," remarked Tom, as it began to grow dusk.

"Sure," assented Ted. "But I'm not sleepy yet."

They sat near the tent for a time, watching the fire which they kept going. They listened to the lapping of the water on the shores of the island.

It grew darker, and was very still and

quiet. The boys kept on looking at the fire, and finally Tom said:

"Let's go to bed!"

"Sure!" agreed Ted.

They put some heavy pieces of wood on the fire so it would burn as long as possible, and then, wrapping themselves in their blankets, they started to go to sleep. But at first they were restless, and every now and then Ted or Tom would say something.

"Did you hear that noise?" Ted asked once.

"Sure, I heard it," his chum answered.

"But it isn't anything."

"I thought maybe it might be Pete Mor-dant sneaking around," went on Ted.

"Aw, he won't come here!" declared Tom.

At last they fell asleep, and, rather to their disappointment, nothing happened all night. They did not even wake up until it was broad daylight, so soundly did they sleep.

"Camping is fun!" declared Tom.

"The best ever," agreed Ted. "Now, we'll have breakfast. But we don't want to eat much because we want to save room for a lot of that chicken potpie we're going to have at noon."

"That's right," assented Tom.

For breakfast they had bacon and eggs again, with some bread and butter.

"Best meal I ever had in my life!" said Tom, as he got up from the flat stump that served as a table.

"That's what I say!" added Ted. "Now, we'll explore some more and when it's noon we'll eat that potpie. Oh, how I love chicken!"

Tom agreed with him.

Their search for adventures that morning was no more successful than it had been the day before. But they had a good time wandering about Wreck Island, picking up pretty shells and stones, which they said they would take back to Lola and Janet.

About noon they wandered back to their camp and, taking the cold chicken potpie from the glass jar in which Mrs. Taylor had put it, Ted turned it into a kettle and hung it over the fire.

"It will take about half an hour to warm through, my mother said," remarked Tom. "We can walk to the end of the island and back while we're waiting for it."

This the boys did, wandering around, talk-

ing meanwhile about the fine chicken dinner they would have.

"And maybe we'll stay to-night," suggested Ted. "We could catch fish and fry them, because we haven't much more left to eat. Shall we stay another night?"

"I don't believe so," answered Tom. "I guess we'd better go back home. Our folks might be lonesome."

"That's so," agreed his chum. "Well, I guess it's time for our dinner," he added. "Let's go back. Oh, boy, but I'm hungry!"

"So'm I!" echoed Tom.

When they got back within sight of their tent, there was the campfire merrily blazing, but the kettle of chicken potpie was gone!

"Why—why!" stammered Ted, rubbing his eyes. "Look!"

"Look!" echoed Tom. "There's nothing to look at! Our dinner's gone!"

CHAPTER XXIII

THE HIDDEN CAMP

FOR a few seconds the two camping-out boys were so surprised and disappointed that, as Ted remarked afterward, neither hardly knew whether he was standing on his head or his feet. Then, as it came to them that their appetizing chicken potpie dinner was gone, they hurried forward to the fire, which still burned. That had not been scattered, but the kettle, chicken and all, had been lifted off and taken away.

“It’s gone!” murmured Tom sadly.

“It sure is gone!” agreed Ted. “But the thing to do is to find out where it’s gone and see if we can get it back.”

Ted and Tom had often read stories of the early pioneer days of America and of how the Indians had made war. Also, Mr. Martin had explained to the boys how the Indians traced the white man by observing the tracks they left in the fields or forests. In time white men learned how to scout, or follow a trail, as the Indians did.

When in the woods Mr. Martin had taught his children and their playmates how to look for marks in the grass, in soft ground and among rocks—marks of footprints. He also told them to observe whether tree branches or bush twigs were broken or bent, which would show that somebody had passed through the underbrush.

“We have to look for signs!” declared Ted, and he and Tom at once began to circle about the still burning fire. They bent over and looked at the ground, as they imagined Indians or pioneers would do. But to their disappointment they saw nothing but the marks of their own shoes. Or if the marks of other shoes were there, the two boys could not pick them out.

“I can’t tell if anybody has been here or not,” said Tom, after a while. “Can you?”

Ted shook his head.

“I guess I can’t,” he answered. “But somebody sure was here, or else how did our chicken potpie get taken?”

“Maybe it was a dog or a cat,” suggested Tom.

Again Ted shook his head.

“I don’t believe there’s a dog or cat on this island,” he declared. “Anyhow, a dog

or a cat couldn't reach up and take the pot off the hook."

Failing to see any signs of an intruder on the ground about the fire, the two boys examined the bushes and small trees near their camping place. But they themselves had broken so many branches and twigs in wandering about that it was useless to seek traces in this way.

"I know what happened," said Ted at last, when they had come back to the fire and were looking sorrowfully at it.

"You do?" cried Tom. "What?"

"Somebody came here in a boat, got out, took our potpie, and got back in the boat again and rowed away."

"How do you know?" asked his chum.

"I don't exactly know," replied Ted; "but I'm pretty sure."

"Well, if they came in a boat, maybe they took our boat away with them!" Tom remarked. "We'd better look."

This they did, and, to their relief, they found the *Janlo* safe on the beach where the craft had been pulled up.

"Who do you think did it?" asked Ted, when they came back and were once more standing near the fire, over which were

erected three green poles, from which the pot had hung. Green wood was used instead of dry so it would not catch fire from the blaze that boiled the potpie.

"Well, I don't *know* who did it," answered Ted; "but maybe it was that Pete Mordant."

"He's mean enough to do it!" agreed Tom. "Anybody that will hide a lady's cook-book will take potpies, I guess. Maybe he wanted to take our chicken dinner and then look in the book and see if it was cooked right," Tom suggested, with a little smile.

But it was a very little smile, for the loss of the boys' dinner was no laughing matter. Ted shook his head sadly.

"You can't tell what that Pete Mordant would do," he said. "Of course, I'm not sure he did it. But I think it was Pete I saw in the boat rowing away from here the other day, and maybe Jack, too."

"Maybe," agreed Tom. "Well, what are we going to do?" he asked. "We got to eat something. And there isn't any fun staying here, now our nice dinner is gone."

"No," Ted agreed. "We have some eggs and bacon left. We'll eat that and then we'll sail home."

It was rather a sad ending to a happy little outing, but Ted and Tom made the best of it, and they were hungry enough to enjoy bacon and eggs, though this food was about all they had had to eat since coming to Wreck Island. They had counted so much on that chicken potpie!

Before packing up their things, taking down the tent and sliding the *Janlo* into the water again, the boys went once more over the island on a sort of exploring expedition, looking for any signs of visitors, either human or animal. But they saw no traces.

"What I think happened," remarked Ted, "was that somebody landed on our end of the island in a boat when we were at the other end. They smelled our potpie cooking and just lifted it, pot and all, off the fire and went away with it."

"I guess so," agreed Tom.

There was a good wind that afternoon, and it soon blew the boys' odd boat back to the little dock in front of the cottages on the shore of Oyster River. Janet and Lola were down on the beach, with Trouble, to welcome home the returning campers.

"Did you have a good time?" asked Lola.

"Fine!" the boys answered together.

"Were you afraid?" Janet questioned.

"Afraid?" cried her brother indignantly.

"What was there to be afraid of?"

"Oh, things in the night. Noises and things like that."

Tom and Ted laughed loudly, but they looked cautiously one at the other. As a matter of fact, they had been startled a bit several times when going to sleep in their tent—half alarmed by strange noises, as Janet had mentioned. But this was something there was no need to tell to the girls. So Tom laughed and Ted said:

"We weren't afraid at all. We slept fine!" and this was true as far as it went.

"Next time I'm going camping with you!" declared Trouble. "I'll take my pop-gun along and I'll shoot—I'll shoot—"

He did not seem to know exactly what he would shoot, so Lola, with a laugh, suggested:

"You can shoot noises in the night, Trouble."

"Yes, I'll shoot noises!" and William also laughed.

The girls helped the boys unload the boat, the tent being put away under the porch of

the Martin cottage for use another time. Then Mrs. Taylor came out and called:

"How did you like the potpie, boys?"

Ted and Tom knew this question would be asked them sooner or later, and they had been dreading it, in a way. But there was no help for it. They had to tell. Tom nudged his chum.

"You tell her," he whispered.

Mrs. Taylor saw that something was wrong, but she did not guess what it was. She said again:

"How did you like your chicken potpie?"

"We—now—we didn't—we didn't get a chance to eat it," stammered Ted.

"You didn't eat it!" exclaimed Tom's mother. "Well, the idea! That's what I made it for. I thought you two would be as hungry as bears, camping out that way."

"We were hungry all right," Ted admitted, with a funny little grin. "But other people were hungrier than we were. Anyhow, they got to our potpie before we did and they took it!"

"What happened?" cried Mrs. Taylor. "Tell me about it!"

Then Mrs. Martin came out and the two mothers, as well as Lola, Janet and Trouble,

listened to the story of the missing dinner.

"That was a mean trick!" declared Mrs. Martin. "Whoever took that potpie should be punished."

"We'd have punished 'em if we could 'a' got hold of 'em!" declared Ted, clenching his fists.

"That's right!" echoed his chum.

When Mr. Martin and Mr. Taylor came home later that afternoon from a fishing trip farther up the bay, they heard the story, and the father of the Curlytops remarked:

"I must look up this Mordant boy. I've been wanting to see him ever since we came here to ask him for that cook-book. Now, I'll ask him about the potpie, too."

Mr. Martin had received a letter from Mr. Mordant, giving the name and address of the man for whom his son worked. It was in a Harbor Dell store. This place, being in a summer resort, employed a number of persons just during the vacation season.

"I'll go over and see this young man," decided Mr. Martin, after hearing the story of the lost potpie.

The several days following the camping out of Ted and Tom on Wreck Island were filled with much fun for the Curlytops and

their friends. They went in bathing, they paddled about on rafts the boys made or they sailed in the *Janlo*. Trouble often went along on these little trips, and once he fell overboard into the river. But it was at a shallow place and Ted hauled him out almost before the little fellow knew what had happened to him.

Then one day Mr. Martin came back from a trip to the village and said to his wife, so that Janet and Ted heard:

"That Peter Mordant must be a queer chap."

"Why so?" asked Mrs. Martin.

"Because he's lost the place he had here. The man who hired him discharged him because Peter didn't do things right, and now he's gone away again. I couldn't find him to ask about the cook-book."

"Oh, let that cook-book go!" exclaimed Mrs. Martin. "It's made trouble enough. It's too bad, of course, that it was lost, and I should never have asked to borrow a thing that, if lost, I couldn't replace, but Mrs. Bailey will get over it in time. She will forget about it."

"Excuse me, Mother," broke in Janet, "but I don't believe she ever will. Every

time she sees me or Ted she asks about that book."

"I'd like to get it back for her," Mr. Martin said. "And I might if I could find Pete Mordant. But he seems to have gone away. His brother Jack was here with him for a time. Did you know that?" Ted's father asked him.

"I thought I saw Jack with Pete in a boat that time," Ted answered. "I wasn't sure, then, and Tom said it wasn't either of them. But now I believe it was."

"Well, if you see Pete, tell him I want that cook-book," concluded Mr. Martin, and Ted said he would.

More happy days followed for the children. They had never been in a place they liked better than Harbor Dell, the only two unpleasant things being the missing cook-book and the lost potpie.

One fine, warm sunny day Ted and Tom planned to go for a little longer sail than usual in the *Janlo*. Janet and Lola, when invited by the boys, said they would go with them, and Mrs. Martin asked if they would not let Trouble go along.

"We'll sail all the way up to Plum Island," Ted decided, when they were get-

ting into the boat. Plum Island was a small patch of sand, rocks and trees a little distance up Oyster River above Wreck Island.

"Isn't that too far to go?" asked Janet.

"We can sail all the way," Tom said.

"We've a fine breeze."

"But you may have to row back," his sister remarked.

"The tide will bring us back," declared Ted. He had learned something about tides since coming to Harbor Dell, and he and Tom had figured out that the tide would turn and begin flowing out soon after their arrival at Plum Island.

"So if the wind doesn't bring us back the tide will," Ted said.

"All right," Janet agreed. "And maybe we can get plums."

The island got its name from the fact that a number of trees of beach plums grew there. Beach plums make good sauce, and the children wanted to bring some to their mothers.

They were soon sailing up the river, keeping close to the shore. Plum Island was nearer the mainland than was the island where the boys had camped, and in what seemed a short time the merry little party landed. The boat was pulled up on the beach

and the boys began roaming about, followed by the girls, looking for plums.

Suddenly, Ted, who was walking ahead, came to a stop on the edge of a little clearing, almost hidden in a grove of small trees.

"Look, Tom!" he whispered to his chum.

"What is it?" asked the other boy.

"Somebody is camping here," went on Ted. He pointed to a tent almost concealed in the bushes. In front of the tent were some broken boxes, an old chair and other things. But what had caught Ted's attention most strongly was a certain kettle hanging on three sticks, gypsy fashion, over the ashes of a fire.

"Look at that pot!" whispered Ted to his chum. "Take a good look at it!"

CHAPTER XXIV

TED AND PETER

JANET and Lola had come to a halt when their brothers stopped, and waited wonderingly for what was to follow. As for Trouble, he seldom came to a stop anywhere. He was always on the go, and now, seeing that the four were standing still, he wandered off to one side to pick some flowers.

"What is it?" asked Janet, trying to look over her brother's shoulder.

"That pot!" went on Ted, in a low voice. "Don't you remember it, Tom? It's the one we had our potpie in—the one somebody took when we were on Wreck Island! See the dent in one side? That's our pot, sure enough!"

Long and earnestly Tom gazed. So did his sister, and she remembered, even if Tom did not, for Mrs. Taylor had not only supplied the potpie the boys didn't get, but the pot had also come from her cottage.

"Yes, that was our pot, all right," Lola said.

"Sure enough! Now, I remember that dent!" chimed in her brother. "The fellows who took our dinner are here on Plum Island, Ted!"

"That's what I think," said the Curlytop lad. "And we're going to find them!"

Lola could not keep back a little scream, but she quickly clapped her hands over her mouth.

"What's the matter?" asked her brother.

"Maybe it's pirates!" the girl suggested.

"What pirates?" asked Ted.

"I mean maybe it was pirates that took your potpie," resumed Lola. "You don't want to go hunting for them on this island. Let the old pot go—let 'em have it. Mother doesn't want it back."

"And you can't get the potpie back, for that was eaten," suggested Janet, who did not like too much excitement.

"No, we can't get the potpie back, and the old pot isn't worth much," agreed Ted. "But I'd like to know who took our dinner. I want to find 'em and tell 'em what I think!"

"Who do you think it was?" asked his sister.

"I think it was Pete Mordant and his

brother Jack," replied Ted. "And if we can find them, I'll ask about Mrs. Bailey's cook-book, too! Daddy said I should."

"I wish daddy was here," said Janet in a low voice. "I wouldn't be afraid then, and I am a little bit now."

"Pooh! Who's afraid?" scoffed Tom. "Ted and I aren't afraid of Pete and Jack; are we?"

"I should say not!" declared Ted.

"I got my pop-gun!" echoed Trouble, hearing this talk that seemed to indicate a fight might be near. "I got my pop-gun and it shoots hard corks, too!"

"Well, you hold on to it," advised his brother. "Maybe we might need it," he added.

As Ted started to cross the little clearing where the camp was located, his sister caught him by the arm.

"Where are you going?" she asked in a low voice.

"To make sure that's Tom's mother's pot-pie pot," was Ted's answer. "And I want to see if Pete and Jack are hiding in that tent with the cook-book."

"Maybe you'd better not!" warned Janet.

"Pooh! Who's afraid?" asked Ted.
"I'm not!"

"I'm not, either," chimed in his chum.
"Anyhow, I don't believe Pete or Jack is in there," and he nodded toward the tent.

"I guess not," assented Ted.

Certainly, if the Mordant boys had been in the tent or about the camp, they would have showed themselves by this time. But there was no sign of them.

After waiting a few minutes, meanwhile talking to the others in a low voice, Ted boldly started across the clearing. After a moment Tom followed. The girls, not wanting to be left behind, trailed along after, with Trouble bringing up the rear.

Ted kept his eyes fixed on the tent as he neared it. The front was only partly open, one of the flaps having fallen. There might, after all, be some one inside, and the Curly-top boy was prepared for a rush.

But nothing happened. He and Tom advanced to the edge of the fire under the pot, which hung from three sticks. The blaze had been out only a little while, however, for there were still some sparks and embers to be seen amid the gray ashes.

"They must be somewhere around here,"

decided Ted, when he had looked inside the tent without seeing any one. "We'll hunt for them."

Lola and Janet also peered within the tent. They saw two beds, made of some boards, to keep out the dampness, laid over with old blankets and comfortables. Between the beds was a rickety table made of old boxes and driftwood, and on this were some dirty dishes.

The camp looked as though two not very neat or careful boys had been living there for some time, and had gone away for a while. They might come back at any moment.

"That's our pot, all right," Tom said, when he had looked more closely at the one dangling over the embers. "It's the one we took to our camp, Ted."

"Is there anything in it?" asked Lola.

Tom leaned over more closely and smelled.

"Beef stew," he answered.

"Not as good as chicken potpie," declared Ted. "But I guess we won't take it, anyhow."

"I should say not!" agreed Janet. "I'd have to be pretty hungry to touch that!"

and she turned up her nose at the food in the pot.

"This island isn't very big," remarked Ted, when they had walked all about the camp. "It won't take long to search it."

"What do you want to search it for?" asked his sister.

"To see if Peter and Jack are on it," was his reply. "I'm going to make Pete give back that cook-book if I can!"

"I'll help you!" offered Tom.

The two girls would rather have gone away, leaving things as they found them, and Janet suggested that they could get Mr. Taylor and Mr. Martin to come to Plum Island and force Peter to give up Mrs. Bailey's book if he had it. But neither Janet nor Lola wanted to tease their brothers too much to come away.

"We'll look around and see if we can find them," decided Ted.

"We'd better all keep together," suggested Lola. "We girls don't care about finding Peter and Jack. You boys can do that."

"We will," promised Ted. "You just follow us."

So the search began.

In a short time Ted, who had forged on ahead of the others, found himself alone in another little clearing. Tom was back a short distance with the girls and William.

As Ted stood looking across the glade, he saw a movement in the bushes on the far side. An instant later Peter Mordant stepped out. The older boy seemed much surprised to see the Curlytop lad, and exclaimed:

“What do you want here? This is my island! Get off it!”

“I will not!” answered Ted, boldly standing his ground.

CHAPTER XXV

THE COOK-BOOK RETURNS

PETER MORDANT, with an unpleasant look on his face, seemed much surprised at being talked to this way by the smaller boy. But when Ted thought of all that had happened—of Peter's having taken that wonderful chicken potpie and of having kept the cook-book away from Mrs. Bailey—it made Ted very brave and bold indeed. Truly, the Curlytop boy was growing up.

"What do you want here, anyhow?" snapped Peter.

"I'm looking for you!" declared Ted.

This seemed further to surprise the Mordant boy.

"Looking for me?" he repeated. "What do you want of me? I don't want you, anyhow, and I tell you to get off my island!"

" 'Tisn't your island!" asserted Ted, and he was right about that.

"Well, my brother Jack and I are camping on this island and we don't want anybody else here!" went on Peter.

"Yes!" snapped Ted, getting a bit angry, which was to be expected, "you're camping out here with a kettle that belongs to Tom and me and you took our chicken potpie from Wreck Island!"

Peter could not keep back a start of surprise when he heard these words. Perhaps he did not know that his camp had been discovered and the tell-tale pot seen. But he evidently guessed that Ted knew what he was talking about, for he did not deny that he had taken the potpie.

"Never mind about that!" snarled the older boy. "You just get off this island and get off quick before I put you off! How'd you get here, anyhow?"

"We came in a boat," Ted answered.

"We?" exclaimed Peter.

Just then he heard the voices of Tom, the girls and Trouble, who were back in the bushes looking for their lost leader.

"Who you got with you?" asked Peter, and he turned a bit pale, for though he was a rough bully he was also a coward, as most such fellows are.

Before Ted had a chance to answer, Tom came bursting through the bushes, followed by Janet, Lola and Trouble, and at the sight

of this little band Peter slunk away, half hiding in the bushes.

"Oh, hello, Pete!" exclaimed Tom, who knew the older lad slightly, though it was with the younger brother, Jack, that Ted and Tom used to play sometimes in Cresco.

Pete did not answer, but Ted and his companions laughed when Lola innocently asked:

"Has he got your chicken potpie?"

"Aw, let up about chicken potpies!" sneered Pete. "What are you all doing on my island? Get off!"

Then Ted took a bold step. Moving a little closer to Pete, the Curlytop boy said:

"You can't give back the chicken potpie, but you got to give back that book or—"

"What book?" interrupted Pete.

"Mrs. Bailey's cook-book!" said Ted. "You picked it up off the coasting hill where it dropped out from under Janet's coat when our bobsled went into a snowdrift. You picked up the book and kept it to get square with Joe Bailey. Now, you give that book up!"

"I—I—" began Pete.

If he was going to say he had not taken

the book Ted gave him no chance. For the Curlytop lad went on:

"You found that book! Your brother Jack told my father you did, and your father wants you to give it back. If you don't, I'll go right now and tell my father you're here and he'll come with a policeman who will arrest you!"

At this threat Pete again turned pale and seemed about to run back into the bushes. But just then there came the sound of tramping feet in the underbrush back of Ted and his party, and a large, good-natured looking fisherman soon stepped into the clearing.

"What's going on here, my hearties?" he asked in a deep voice. "I haven't seen so many children on Plum Island since it was discovered by Columbus! What's the matter?"

"Oh, Mr. Mattock!" exclaimed Janet, recognizing the fisherman who sold her mother and Mrs. Taylor lobsters and clams, "make him give us Mrs. Bailey's cookbook!"

She pointed an accusing finger at Pete Mordant, who seemed to shrink farther into the bushes.

"What's this—has he got a cook-book?" asked the fisherman.

He looked so big and stern that Pete, who had been really frightened by Ted's threat of a policeman, began to weaken. He looked around. There did not seem to be any way of escape. Though the others did not know it, Pete's brother Jack was just then away from the island in their boat, and Pete could not escape except by swimming.

"Aw," mumbled the bully, "I only took the book for fun!"

"It's a queer kind of fun!" exclaimed Janet indignantly.

"Then you admit you have a book belonging to these children?" asked Mr. Mattock sternly.

"Oh, it isn't our book! But I lost it," stated Janet. "It belongs to Mrs. Bailey, of Cresco, and it's all hand-written, the cook-book is, and 'most a hundred years old. Make him give it back!"

"Oh, I'll give it back!" sneered Peter. "I only took it for fun. It was Joe Bailey's fault I got discharged and—"

"If you have a book belonging to some one else you'd better give it up," interrupted the fisherman, who had landed on the island to

see if the beach plums were ready for picking. "Better hand it over, young man," and he looked sternly at Pete Mordant.

"I—I haven't got it here with me," faltered Peter. "It's back in my room where I board in Harbor Dell. I just came here to camp for a few days with my brother. I'll get that book and bring it to you to-night," he promised.

"Are you sure you will?" asked Mr. Mattock.

"Yes!" muttered the Mordant youth. "I'll leave it at his house to-night," and he nodded toward Ted.

"Well, be sure you do," warned Mr. Mattock.

"And you took our potpie, didn't you?" asked Tom, as Pete was slinking back into the underbrush.

"What! Has he got a potpie of yours, too?" asked the big fisherman.

"I guess he hasn't got it now," stated Ted, and he grinned. "But he took it," and he explained how his dinner and Tom's had been taken from Wreck Island.

The Curlytops and their friends remained on the island long enough to gather some beach plums, and then they sailed away.

without having seen anything more of Pete or his brother Jack.

You may easily guess that there was great excitement back at the cottages when the children returned with their story of having encountered Pete Mordant on Plum Island.

"If he brings that book back, well and good," Mr. Martin said. "We'll have to let the potpie go, I guess. But if he doesn't bring the book, I'll certainly get a constable as Mr. Mattock suggested."

Little was talked of in the Martin and Taylor cottages that afternoon but what had happened on Plum Island. Janet was especially happy over the prospect of getting the book back, for she felt that it was in a large measure her fault that the collection of recipes had gone astray.

But when suppers were eaten and there was no sign of Peter coming with the book, as he had promised, the Curlytops began to get anxious.

"When do you think he'll bring it?" asked Janet again and again.

"I don't know," her mother would answer.

"If he doesn't bring it pretty soon, Tom

and I will go back to Plum Island and get it!" declared Ted.

"You'd better leave Pete to me and the constable," suggested Mr. Martin.

It grew dark. Still Peter did not appear with the book.

Suddenly, while the family were all sitting out on the front porch, there was a thud, as of something falling, on the back porch.

"What's that?" exclaimed Mrs. Martin.

Ted and Tom, who was over calling on his chum, ran around to the rear. Ted had a flashlight which he switched on. Its beams shone on a square parcel that lay on the back porch.

"Hurrray!" cried Ted, as he opened the bundle. "Mrs. Bailey's cook-book has come back! Hurrray!"

CHAPTER XXVI

THE CURLYTOPS GROWING UP

JANET heard her brother's happy shout while running around the cottage in the darkness, following the path of the flashlight's beam. With her was Lola.

"Is it really the cook-book?" asked Ted's sister excitedly. "Really, Ted?"

"Sure!" he told her. "Look!"

There was no doubt of it. There was the original collection of hand-written recipes that Mrs. Martin had borrowed of the widow in the winter. It had come to no harm, for it had been in the snow only a little while before Pete Mordant had come along and picked it up, keeping it all this time to "get even" with Joe Bailey.

"Oh, how glad I am it's back!" murmured Janet, holding the book carefully.

"So am I!" exclaimed her mother, when she heard the good news. "Mrs. Bailey would always hold it against me if she did not get her book back, and rightly so."

"Why do you suppose Pete chucked it on the back porch?" asked Tom.

"Because he was afraid to come around in front with it," declared Ted. "Maybe he sent Jack with it."

"Maybe," Tom agreed.

They never found out the truth of this, for Pete and his brother disappeared from Harbor Dell the next day. None of the Curlytops or their friends saw them go, but Mr. Mattock, when he came that Friday with lobsters and clams, said he had seen Pete getting on a train with another boy.

Nor did the children or their parents ever see the Mordants again, for the family moved away from Lakeville.

Whether Peter had ever told George Perkin that the book would be given back for a reward, as George seemed to hint, was never learned. George got over his illness at the home of his cousin in Lakeville, but he and his family moved away from Cresco before the Curlytops had a chance to question him about the reward. Perhaps Pete might have said something of it. But it remained a mystery.

The next day the valuable cook-book was sent by registered mail to Mrs. Bailey in

Cresco, accompanied by a letter of apology and explanation. In due time a letter from the widow came back, acknowledging its receipt and expressing thanks for getting her prized book.

"I am so glad to get it," she wrote, "because it has in it recipes that I never could remember. I couldn't remember a third of them, no, not a sixteenth!"

"She does love fractions!" chuckled Ted when his mother read him Mrs. Bailey's letter.

With the loss of the cook-book no longer worrying Janet, she and Lola began to enjoy the life at Harbor Dell more than ever. And certainly Ted and Tom did also. As for Trouble, it did not take much to amuse him.

One day the Curlytops and the other children went on a motor boat with their fathers and mothers to fish in a deep part of the bay. There Ted and Tom caught some good-sized fish, and Lola and Janet, too, had good luck.

Trouble had his usual luck. He felt quite a tug on his line and began to pull it in, shouting:

"I got a big fish! Oh, I got a terrible big fish! And I'm going to take it off the hook myself. I'm big now. I can unhook my own fish; can't I, Daddy?"

"We'll see," said Mr. Martin.

But when Trouble's catch was pulled on board, it turned out to be only a big, blue-clawed crab that had become tangled in the line; and Trouble, brave as he believed himself to be, did not want to touch the creature which clashed its large claws savagely. The skipper of the boat, however, was not afraid, for he knew how to take hold of the crab by its flippers so it could not pinch. The crab was put into a box with wet seaweed for Trouble to watch, and he had as much fun out of it as if he had caught a whale, Janet said.

So the happy days passed, with fishing, swimming, boating and visiting the different islands in Oyster River. Tom and Ted camped out again, staying two nights this time. And they had another chicken potpie which did not disappear as had the other.

But summer cannot last forever. The days grew shorter. Fall was at hand, and the Curlytops and their friends began to

talk of closing the cottages and going back to Cresco.

"School will soon open," said Mrs. Martin.

"Well, it won't be so bad," Ted remarked. "We'll be in higher classes, Tom."

"That's right," agreed Ted's chum.

"And I'm going to get out of the kindergarten!" exclaimed Trouble. "I'm going to be in the first reader and I'm going to have my hair cut and my name is going to be Will!"

"Yes, my Curlytops are growing up," said Mrs. Martin with a little sigh. But it was not an unhappy sigh.

"She said the same thing and again sighed later in the fall when Ted started back to school, for he had on his first long trousers. At first they felt a bit odd to the Curlytop lad, but Tom and some of the other boys also wore them, so Ted did not feel as strange as otherwise he might.

Trouble's hair was cut short, and I think there were just a few tears in Mrs. Martin's eyes as she saw his curls shorn.

"I'm growing up, too!" boasted Will, as he must now be called, when he saw Ted

looking down at his long pants. "I'm growing up, too!"

And when Janet came home one day from the barber's with her first hair bob—well, her mother looked at her for a moment, then kissed her daughter as she said, softly:

"Janet, you are growing to be quite a girl! Yes, my Curlytops are surely growing up!"

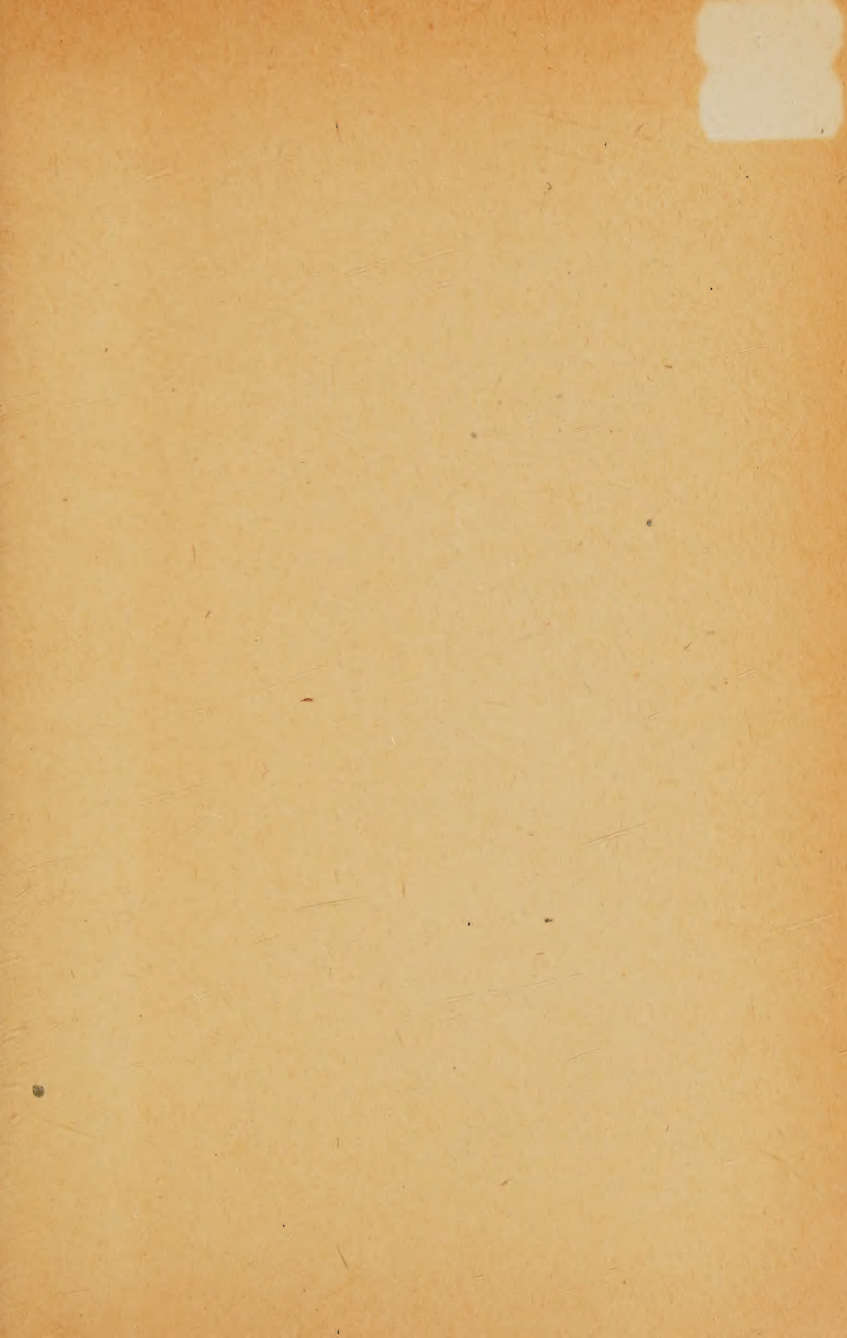
And there we shall leave them—still growing.

THE END

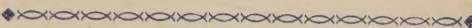
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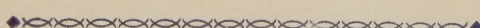


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A strange man with gold rings in his ears leaves a beautiful parrot in Mrs. Traddle's candy store. Teddy and his friends take the parrot but lose it. A merry hunt for the bird and its mysterious owner follows.

5. TEDDY AND THE MYSTERY PONY

Teddy spends a summer at Clover Cottage and becomes involved in the adventures of Pinto, a strange and very clever pony, who vanishes. The mysterious trail leads from the farm to an abandoned mill before the mystery is solved.

6. TEDDY AND THE MYSTERY DEER

A strange deer appears out of nowhere, roots up Mrs. Traddle's garden, startles Teddy and his friends, and leads them a merry chase before being captured.

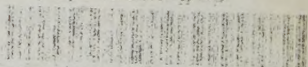
7. TEDDY AND THE MYSTERY GOAT

Teddy and his fun-loving friends take to their bicycles in a merry hunt for a mysterious goat. While they camp out, one of the bikes disappears. But Teddy and his chums take up the chase until the mystery is solved.

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